The Virgin Mary in the Writings of Maria Valtorta

FR. GABRIEL M. ROSCHINI, O.S.M.

Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

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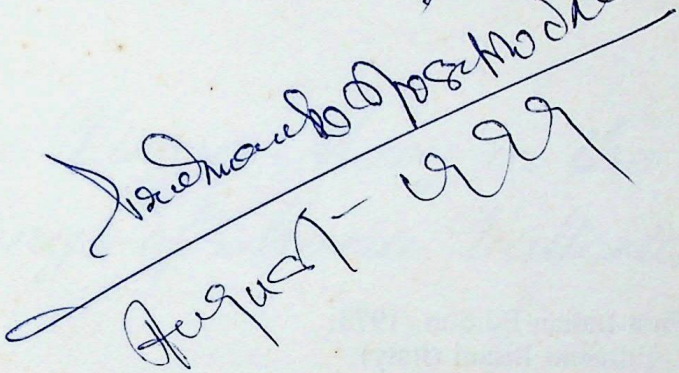

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The Virgin with Angels, by early Spanish painter Pere Serra (1330-1404), the best known of a family of painters. Italian influence is quite noticeable in this Madonna. The painting, which was part of the superaltar made for Santa Clara's Church in Tortosa (Spain), is now kept in the Art Museum of Barcelona.

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FR. GABRIEL M. ROSCHINI, O.S.M.

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Dedication

Feeling indebted to Saint Maximilian-Mary Kolbe for his intercession, Kolbe's Publications dedicate this important Marian work to this great Franciscan monk, priest and apostle, who, in August 1941, to save the life of a war prisoner, a family man, gave up his own in the purest of sacrificial holocausts that can spring from genuine Catholic Charity. As "Knight of the Immaculate" he led the zealous and untiring life of a Journalist, Editor and Publisher for his Queen, for the Faith and for the Church.

It is Saint Maximilian who wrote, among abundant and highly inspiring articles and letters, such paragraphs as this:

"Let us deluge the world with writings about Jesus Christ and about Mary, in all languages. It is the surest way to fight and disprove all the errors propagated by the press, for the press is the most powerful spreader of errors on the planet. Let us cover the whole world with writings that bear Words of Life, and it will learn again the Joy of Living."

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Translation of Pope Paul VI's Appreciation
(a photographic reproduction of the original is on next page.)

SECRETARIAT OF STATE

#250075

Vatican City, January 17, 1974

Reverend Father,

With delicate and deferential attention, you have wished to have a complimentary copy of your recent volume "La Madonna negli scritti di Maria Valtorta" handed over to the Sovereign Pontiff.

Appreciating your piety and your zeal, of which this publication is the obvious proof and precious result, the Holy Father thanks you wholeheartedly for this new testimony of your respectful regards, and wishes you to receive from your labour the consolation of abundant spiritual benefits.

With such fatherly wishes and as a sign of choice favours from the Divine Redeemer, His Holiness gladly grants you a propitiatory Apostolic blessing.

Much obliged for your good wishes to me and for the copy kindly sent me, I gladly avail myself of this opportunity to express my sincere and religious regards to you, Reverend Father.

Yours very truly in the Lord

(signature)

Reverend Father
Father GABRIELE M. ROSCHINI
Marianum Pontifical Theological Faculty

ROME

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SEGRETERIA DI STATO

N. 250075

DAL VATICANO, 17 Gennaio 1974

Reverendo Padre,

Con delicato e reverente pensiero, Ella ha voluto far pervenire al Sommo Pontefice l'omaggio della copia del suo recente volume dal titolo "La Madonna negli scritti di Maria Valtorta".

Apprezzando la sua pietà e il suo zelo, di cui la pubblicazione è evidente prova e pregevole risultato, il Santo Padre La ringrazia di cuore per la nuova testimonianza di devoto ossequio e Le auspica che dalla sua fatica possa raccogliere copiosi e consolanti frutti di bene spirituale.

Con tali paterni voti e in pegno di eletti favori del Divino Redentore, Sua Santità Le imparte volentieri la propiziatrice Benedizione Apostolica.

Molto grato per i voti augurali e per l'esemplare del volume a me gentilmente inviati, profitto volentieri della circostanza per confermarmi con sensi di sincero e religioso ossequio

della Paternità Vostra Rev.da

Dev.mo nel Signore

+ G. Benelli Sost.

Reverendo Padre
Padre GABRIELE M. ROSCHINI
Pontificia Facoltà Teologica "Marianum"

ROMA

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Foreword

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Declaration by Fr. Gabriel M. Roschini

I have been studying, teaching, preaching, and writing Mariology[1] *for half a century already. To do this, I had to read innumerable works and articles of all kinds on Mary: a real Marian library.*

I feel, however, that I must candidly admit that the Mariology found in all of Maria Valtorta's writings — both published and unpublished — has been a real discovery for me. No other Marian writings, not even the sum total of everything I have read and studied, were able to give me as clear, as lively, as complete, as luminous, or as fascinating an image, both simple and sublime, of Mary, God's Masterpiece.

It seems to me that the conventional image of the Blessed Virgin, portrayed by myself and my fellow Mariologists, is merely a papier mâché *Madonna compared to the living and vibrant Virgin Mary envisioned by Maria Valtorta, a Virgin Mary perfect in every way.*

---

1. The first, non-exhaustive bibliography of Fr. Roschini's writings appeared in *Marianum* (#123, 1979). It listed 920 titles. 790 of these were articles and other writings (forewords, etc.) in various periodicals or works; many book reviews are not included in this bibliography. The other 130 titles represent books, 66 of which are rather large (200 pages or more). Twenty-nine of these books are series of 2, 3, or 4 volumes. All these works belong to different genres (didactic, literary, critical, historical . . .) and deal with subjects from several fields: theology, philosophy, exegesis, spirituality, history (including 23 biographical monographs), etc. The greater part of Fr. Roschini's work is dedicated to Mariology. Some titles are: [*Mariology (Introduction and Mariological Summa)*], vol. I to IV, 1947-8; [*The Virgin Mary according to the Faith and Theology*], vol. I to IV, 1953-4; [*Dictionary of Mariology*], 517 p., 1960; *Il Tuttosanto e la Tuttasanta* [*The Relationship between the Virgin Mary and the Holy Spirit*], vol. I and II, 1976-7.

Other, shorter works went through several editions and translations in various languages: [*God's Masterpiece*], 178 p., 1933; *Who Is Mary. An Advanced Catechism of the Blessed Virgin.* N.Y., Society of St. Paul, translated in 1950, 64 p.; [*Marian Instructions*], 383 p., 1945; [*Life of Mary*], 373 p., 1945. Several other works pertained to various current Mariological issues, for instance: [*The Dogma of the Assumption*], 311 p., 1950; [*The Perpetual Virginity of Mary*], 154 p., 1968; [*The Problematic of Co-Redemption*], 150 p., 1969; [*Mary's Mediation Today*], 114 p., 1971. Some of Fr. Roschini's university courses in Rome were also published, as well as several of his radio conferences on the Vatican Radio Station. [Publisher — Kolbe's.]

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For this fundamental reason, in order to present the Mariology of Valtorta's writings, I have chosen to let Maria Valtorta speak for herself and limit my own initiative to coordinate everything she wrote, in various texts, in her incomparable way. Some might see this procedure as a fault. I see it, rather, as an enrichment.

It is good to know, moreover, that I did not spontaneously admire Maria Valtorta. At first I was one of those who, without first-hand knowledge of her writings, was content to sneer at them. After reading and studying them, I had, like many others, to be fair, recognize that I had been too rash, and come to the conclusion: that whoever wants to know the Blessed Virgin (a Virgin in perfect harmony with the Holy Scriptures, the Tradition of the Church and the Church Magisterium . . .) should draw from Valtorta's Mariology.

If anyone believes my declaration is only one of those ordinary hyperbolic slogans abused by publicity, I will say this only: let them read before they judge![2]

Gabriel M. Roschini, O.S.M.

2. That was, in essence, Pope Pius XII's recommendation to three members of the Order of the Servants of Mary — Fr. Andrea M. Cecchin, Prior, and Fr. Corrado M. Berti and Fr. Romualdo M. Migliorini, theologians — during their special audience on Feb. 26, 1948 (cf. the *Osservatore Romano* [Feb. 27, 1948]). "Publish this work as is. There is no need to give an opinion on its origin, whether it be extraordinary or not: whoever reads will understand." [Publisher — Kolbe's.]

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Publisher's Note
in the Second Italian Edition (1986)

Born in Castel Sant'Elia (Viterbo, Italy) in 1900, Alessandro Roschini changed his name to Gabriele-Maria when he entered the Order of the Servants of Mary at an early age. He was ordained a priest in 1924. As a Doctor in philosophy and master in sacred theology, Fr. Roschini devoted his entire life to serve Mary. Loving Her with deep piety, he helped others to know Her with his preaching, uninterrupted teaching for over 50 years, fundamental Mariological research and numerous publications.

In 1939, Father Roschini founded the international periodical Marianum, which he directed for thirty years. In 1950, he founded the Marianum Theological Faculty in Rome and was its rector for the first fifteen years.[3] We also owe to him the rebirth of the Marian Library. With Pius XII's approval in 1946, it was transferred to the International College of Saint Alexis Falconieri, which was to house the Faculty. Fr. Roschini also assumed important functions within both his order and a few decasteries of the Roman Curia. . . .

* * *

Fr. Roschini's first encounter with the writings of Maria Valtorta is documented in the declaration which he made in Rome, on August 27, 1946. "Upon the Most Reverend General Father's request, I have reviewed volume one of the work. It could be entitled "A Footnote to the Gospel," since it begins with the Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary and ends just before Our Lord Jesus Christ's Public Ministry. I have found nothing in it against faith or morals. Instead, I have found the breath of a great spirituality and a most exceptional capacity to reconstruct the Gospel scenes. Permission for publication may therefore be granted on the following conditions: 1. Explicitly declare that only human faith can be put in what is recounted and that it is only a human reconstruction; 2. omit everything that, explicitly or to all practical purposes, claims that the work has a divine origin; the latter is not beyond doubt on account of some hints to the contrary; 3. do all the previously mentioned corrections and those recommended by prudence, etc."[4]

---

3. Marianum was the first faculty of its kind in the Church. It is now a pontifical institute. [The contents of footnotes 3, 5, and 6 in the present publisher's note are taken from the first Italian edition's publisher's note, written on December 8, 1973 by Emilio Pisani. Editor.]

4. In 1946 Fr. Roschini's attitude was still bureaucratically non-committal. As regards the second point he then made, it is interesting to note Pope Pius XII's deci-

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In 1949 Fr. Roschini paid a courtesy call to the bedridden writer, in her house in Viareggio, but did not seem to be moved in the least. Back in Rome he kept in touch with various colleagues seeking to publish Maria Valtorta's work. These were Fr. Romualdo M. Migliorini, who died in 1953, and Fr. Corrado M. Berti. As they met with opposition, Fr. Roschini sometimes advised them. Remembering the good business relation which Alexis M. Cardinal Lépicier, O.S.M., whose memory he revered, had had with our publishing and printing house, he directed Fr. Berti to us. His bogged down publication project was put on track again. The work of Maria Valtorta was finally published in four large volumes . . .

Fr. Roschini's relationship with us was increasingly cordial and trusting; whenever he could, he would gladly entrust us with the printing of his books. . . . He never failed to ask about the progress of Maria Valtorta's writings, of which the revised, ten-volume edition was being published at the time. He always expressed moderate satisfaction.

One afternoon of August 1972, he rang the bell at Valtorta's house in Viareggio. He was dropping by unexpectedly to see Marta Diciotti, who survived Maria and looked after the house. By a happy coincidence, my wife and I were spending a few days at Marta's at the time. Astounded, we welcomed him. He was returning from his yearly holidays (which he always spent at the Servites' monastery in Pietralba in the Dolomite Alps). This time he had spent all his time, even many hours at night, reading Valtorta's voluminous work. He had been won over. He was touched. With edifying humility, he begged pardon for his previous distrust and signed the guest book, expressing his devotion and admiration. Already he was planning to study and spread Maria Valtorta's writings. He was to devote to them the last classes of his course, "The Marian Intuitions of Great Mystics," to be given a few months later at the Marianum.[5]

At this time the civil and ecclesiastic authorizations necessary for Maria Valtorta's privileged burial were granted. It was to take place on July 2, 1973, the then Marian feast day of the Visitation. On that day, Fr. Roschini himself, as priest, accompanied Maria Valtorta's mortal remains during their private translation from Viareggio to Florence. He presided over the Eucharistic Concelebration, made the appropriate discourse, and gave the blessing for the burial in the Chapel of the Chapter at the great cloister of the Santissima Annunziata Basilica. On December 8, 1973, he returned with us. To the crowd gathered for an official celebration of the July-2 event, he presented his book: *La Madonna negli scritti di Maria Valtorta.*

He was at the height of his activities: professor at the Lateran Pontifical University and at the "Marianum" Pontifical Theological Faculty; Advisor

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sion. In the 1948 audience mentioned in note 2, Pius XII said to publish Maria Valtorta's work as is. When he was specifically asked whether the mentions of visions or dictations were to be omitted, he said not to omit anything. [Editor.]

5. The present book resulted from these lectures. Father Gabriel M. Roschini was also a professor at the Pontifical Lateran University.

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for the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and for the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of the Saints.[6]

* * *

He died in Rome on September 12, 1977, the day dedicated to the Name of Mary. Within a few months, an unrelenting ailment had broken his strong constitution. I had seen him again, exhausted with suffering, on a bed in the Salvator Mundi Clinic. I was unable to understand anything he said but his usual greeting: "Dear Pisani. . ."

Four years had gone by since the day when, having passed the proofs of the present book's first Italian edition, he read to me his foreword before entrusting it to me with near solemnity. It was the most courageous deed of his life.

Emilio Pisani
Isola del Liri, May 1986.

6. Father Gabriel M. Roschini was also at some time Prior General of the Order of the Servants of Mary, Vicar General, and General director of its studies. He was also a member of several scholarly academies, and vice-president of the Pontifical Academy of Our Lady Immaculate. In 1965, the Italian government bestowed on him the Gold Medal for cultural, literary and artistic merit.

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

I have decided to quote the Bible from the Douay-Challoner translation, since it does not stray from the truly Catholic, traditional exegesis followed by Fr. Roschini. All quotations have the *thees* and *thous* and the like replaced by their modern equivalents.

The passage from Tobit 13: 13-16 caused special problems, however. This is because the various extant manuscripts of the original Greek text of the Book of Tobit differ in several instances, and each translator must choose among the textual variants. Now the Douay version is not based on the same textual variants as the Italian version which Fr. Roschini quoted. Since Fr. Roschini did an elaborate Marian commentary on the Italian text of Tobit 13: 13-16 which he chose, I had to have an English text based on the same Greek textual variants. Since I could not find any, I had to start with the closest one I could get and edit it on the basis of the Italian translation, while keeping an eye on a critical edition of the Greek Septuagint with all the textual variants in Greek.

Unfortunately, the closest English text I found was that of the Jerusalem Bible. I say unfortunately, because it seems to me that the Jerusalem Bible has been affected by the type of modernistic thinking which was condemned by Pope Pius X in 1907. This in turn leads me to question the choice of variants by the Italian editors of the Bible quoted by Fr. Roschini, although Fr. Roschini gives a truly edifying commentary on the version he did choose. However, had he followed a Traditional translation based on the Vulgate (such as Douay), he would have achieved two goals: 1. he would have had an even richer text to expound on, a text even more Marian than the one he chose; 2. he would have been more in line with Maria Valtorta's own writings, since in at least two passages, when Tobit is quoted, a text very similar to that of

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the Vulgate is used. (These texts of Valtorta's are quoted on p.302-303 and 193 of the present book.)

Passages from volumes I-V and most of volume VI of Maria Valtorta's *Poema dell'Uomo-Dio* are quoted from the corresponding volumes (1, 2, and 3) of the English translation. I have touched them up in various places. The corrections (or adaptations, mostly of Britishisms) are enclosed in curly brackets, like these { }. The quotations from volumes 1, 2, and 3 also have some editorial changes, mostly by Fr. Roschini. These are enclosed in square brackets, like these [ ]. Elsewhere in the book, square brackets indicate editorial additions or changes, either by Fr. Roschini or myself.

All other passages from Maria Valtorta have been provisionally translated for the needs of the present publication.

Whenever Fr. Roschini quotes authors other than Maria Valtorta, I have made use, wherever possible, of existing English translations and have referred to these in bibliographical notes. Other authors quoted by Fr. Roschini may have quoted from translations of the Bible other than Douay.

Paul T. Y. Atworth

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Introduction

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I. THE IMPORTANCE OF MYSTICS FOR MARIOLOGY

Marian doctrine, as found in the revelations of the Church's great mystics, is still mostly unexplored territory. This constitutes a serious omission for Mariology. We can find, in the private revelations of great mystics, many valuable elements for the construction of the Mariological building. There is enough to elaborate a "Mariology According to the Great Mystics": a Mariology which would be new or renewed in several respects, fresh, attractive, and full of vitality.

Our great mystics, as well as their writings, must not be underestimated. God our Father speaks to us through the Prophets, through Christ His Son, (Infinite Wisdom, Incarnate Word), through the Apostles and the evangelists (in the canonical writings), through the Church and its visible head, the Roman Pontiff, and the Doctors of the Church. Moreover, He speaks to us through mystics. Mystics are those people whom God has enriched with extraordinary gifts, which are known as *charismata*. These *charismata* are graces granted over and above the merits of individuals for the sake of the salvation of others. Through these mystics, God not only reveals Himself and His ineffable mysteries; He also speaks to us about His Most Holy Mother, Her incomparable dignity, Her unique mission, and Her singular privileges.

Who are these mystics through whom God has told us about the Blessed Virgin? There are many of them, more than I can deal with. I have, therefore, decided to limit myself to female mystics, beginning with one of the greatest contemporary mystics: Maria Valtorta.

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II. THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF MARIA VALTORTA

Before I develop the "Marian intuitions" found in the mystical writings of Maria Valtorta, here is, as an introduction, a brief presentation of her *life* and *work*.

1. Her Life

Her exceptional, richly talented personality comes to life for us, with all her qualities and faults, in her novel-like *Autobiografia*.

Her life may be divided into two stages: *from her birth to the paralysis of her legs*, which disabled her at the age of 37; *from the time of her paralysis* (which left her bed-ridden) *until her death* 27 years later.

First stage: (1897-1934)

Maria Valtorta was born on March 14, 1897 at Caserta, where her father (chief adjutant of the cavalry) was temporarily stationed. Doctors had expected her to have been stillborn. Her mother (an educated, but harsh woman) reacted as though the child was not born to her. She hired a wet-nurse. Maria was 18 months old, when her family moved to Faenza. A year and a half later, in September 1901, the family relocated in Milan. There, Maria, a little over four, started attending a kindergarten run by Ursuline Sisters. There, she wrote: "I met the face of God and His love," (*Autobiografia*, p.22) and "I never let go of Him" (*ibid.*, p.24).

By the age of seven, in October 1904, Maria had entered the Institute of Marcelline Sisters to begin her elementary education. On May 30, 1905 she received the Sacrament of Confirmation at the hands of the Servant of God, Cardinal Ferrari. It was, she said, "my Pentecost" (*ibid.*, p.25).

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Her family moved to Voghera in September 1907. Maria made her First Communion when she was ten on October 5, 1908. On that day, her fusion with Jesus became "perfect" (*ibid.*, p.72).

She entered the College of the Sisters of St. Bartolomea Capitanio in Monza on May 1, 1909 at the age of twelve. She remained there four years (five school years), and was held up to all as a role model. During this time, she was received into the congregation of the Daughters of Mary. In 1911, she obtained her diploma in technical studies. During the next two years she did supplementary studies in literature and the history of various countries.

The Valtortas again moved on March 1, 1913, this time to Florence; Maria was almost 16. Her lifestyle remained like that of college.

Twice, in 1914 and 1919 respectively, her mother, for selfish reasons, mercilessly and brutally broke up Maria's engagements with two fine young men.

From early November 1917 until the summer of 1920, Maria generously sacrificed her time in war hospitals with the Samaritan nurses. There she caught a violent Spanish flu. After she had recovered from the flu, in September 1920, her cousin Belfanti invited her to Reggio in Calabria. Almost two years later, in 1922, she returned to Florence. In the spring of 1923, Maria Valtorta made an initial offering of herself to God.

By October of 1924, the Valtorta family had permanently established themselves in Viareggio. In Viareggio, on January 28, 1925, following the example of St. Teresa of Lisieux, Maria offered herself as a victim to Merciful Love. She renewed this offering daily for the rest of her life.

In December 1929, she joined Catholic Action and worked zealously for three years as a delegate for the culture of Catholic youth, giving numerous presentations and conferences. On July 1, 1930, Maria Valtorta offered

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herself as a "victim to divine Justice." Divine Justice did not spare her: physical and spiritual suffering began to rain on her, and increased to the point where, by January 4, 1933, she could not leave her house. From April 1, 1934 until she died (that is, for 27 and a half years), she was forced to remain in bed.

Second stage: (1934-1961)

As Jesus was nailed to the cross, so, for the last 27 and a half years of her life, Maria Valtorta was nailed to her bed by various diseases. She found effective spiritual support in Father Romualdo Migliorini, O.S.M. On March 25, 1944, he received her in the third order of the Servants of Mary. At that time she was already a secular Franciscan.

It is in the second part of her life that her writings blossomed.

In the spring of 1949, Maria Valtorta, to complete her preceding offerings, generously gave to God everything which was "exclusively hers and which she had received from God: her intellect and the satisfaction to see her work approved" (Letter to Mother Teresa Maria of St. Joseph, Discalced Carmelite, April 18, 1949). God accepted Valtorta at her word. She saw the planned publication of her writings become hindered. Then from 1956 until her death, her mental faculties declined. She died in the morning of October 12, 1961, at the very moment Father Innocenzo M. Rovetti, the Examiner of the Third Order of the Servants of Mary, was pronouncing the words recommending her soul: "Depart from this world, O Christian soul." Obeying, as she had always done, she left the earth for Heaven. People noticed that her right hand — with which she had written so many sublime texts — contrarily to her left hand, retained the colour, suppleness and beauty of someone alive rather than dead.

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2. Her Writings

In only eight years (1943 to 1951), Maria Valtorta wrote more than 15,000 pages (in 122 notebooks), even though bedridden and unable to consult useful books. She wrote during the war which forced her evacuation and exposed her to bombings and various deprivations. She never drew up plans of what she would be writing. She never corrected her text: her first draft was her definitive text. She seldom even reread what she had written.[7] Her work contains *descriptive* scenes (of what she saw and heard) and *dictations* (by Jesus, the Blessed Virgin, and a certain Angel). The stylistic differences between the descriptions and the dictations leap out from the page. We find ourselves facing an effect (her work) which seems to be beyond its cause (Maria Valtorta).

All in all, in eight years and under the adverse conditions described above, she wrote 17 volumes.[8]

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7. Before describing another vision, Maria Valtorta seldom reread what she had written before. Later, however, she did proofread a typewritten copy of her writings (the D2 copy). While doing so, she added a number of enlightening comments [Editor.]

8. All of Maria Valtorta's writings, except for some secular writings and correspondence, are found in 122 notebooks. While most of this material has been published in Italian, relatively little has been published in English. The Italian publisher has drawn the following works from the 122 notebooks, according to subject matter:

(A) *Il poema dell'Uomo-Dio.* The visions of the lives of Jesus and Mary. (1st Italian ed., 1956-1959; 2nd Italian ed., 1964-1966; 3rd Italian ed., 1975). Referred to as *Poema.* Volume and page numbers refer to the 1975 Italian edition. Cross-references to the English translation (where applicable) are given in Appendix D.

Further signs may be used when *Poema* is quoted. A= the handwritten manuscript; D1= the first typewritten copy; D2= the second typewritten copy. These copies were typed by Fr. Romualdo M. Migliorini, O.S.M. D2 was copied from D1 and not from the original manuscript.

There are *2 complete copies* of D2. Each has 4,162 pages. One of these was revised, touched up and annotated by Maria Valtorta herself; she did not revise the other one which, however, was published in Italian in four big volumes. (This was the first Ital-

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III. THE GREATEST FEMALE MARIAN MYSTICS

The greatest female Marian mystics in ancient and modern times are:

— St. Hildegarde of Bingen, Benedictine (1098-1179), known as "the Sibyl of the Rhine";
— St. Mechtildis of Helfta (St. Matilda), Cistercian (1241-1299);
— St. Gertrude the Great, Cistercian (1256-1302 or 1309), the greatest mystic of the 13th century;
— Blessed Angela of Foligno, secular Franciscan (1246-1309);
— St. Bridget of Sweden (Birgitta) (1309-1373), "the Northern Mystic";
— St. Catherine of Siena, tertiary Dominican (1347-1380), Doctor of the Church;
— St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, Carmelite (1566-1607);
— Venerable Maria de Agreda, Franciscan (1602-1665);
— St. Veronica Giuliani, Capuchin (1660-1727);

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ian edition of 1956-1959). Of course, a new, *critical* edition was needed. It was printed in Italian in 1964-1966 and reprinted in 1975.

(B) *Autobiografia.* Maria Valtorta's autobiography, written under obedience to her spiritual director, Fr. Migliorini. (1st Italian ed., 1969; 2nd Italian ed., revised and augmented, 1981). Referred to as *Autobiografia.* References are to the second Italian edition.

(C) *Libro di Azaria* [The Book of Azariah]. A commentary on the liturgy of 58 feast-days. (Published in Italian in 1972). Referred to as *Azariah* (Italian edition).

(D) *Lezioni sull'Epistola di Paolo ai Romani* [A Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans] (1977).

Once the previous works were drawn from the 122 notebooks, the remaining miscellaneous writings were gathered in the three following books:

(E) *I Quaderni del 1943* (published in Italian in 1976),

(F) *I Quaderni del 1944* (published in Italian in 1980), and

(G) *I Quaderni dal 1945 al 1950* (published in Italian in 1984).

References to one of these *Quaderni* (an Italian word which means "notebooks") are made according to the following pattern: (*Quad. '43*, p.636 [Dec. 8]), i.e. "*Quad.*" (="Quaderni"), followed by the year, the page number and the date (given by Maria Valtorta herself).

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— Blessed Mary-Magdalen Martinengo, Capuchin (1687-1737);
— Servant of God Mary of St. Theresa Petit, Third Order Carmelite (1623-1677);
— Venerable Mary-Archangel Biondini, of the Handmaids of Mary (1641-1712);
— Servant of God Cecil Bay, Benedictine (1694-1766);
— Venerable Anne Catherine Emmerich, Augustinian (1774-1824);
— Servant of God Marie Véronique of the Heart of Jesus, founder of the Institute of the Victims of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (1825-1883);
— Guglielmina Ronconi (1864-1936);
— Servant of God Lucia Mángano, Ursuline (1896-1946);
— Maria Valtorta, tertiary of the Order of Servants of Mary (1897-1961).

Before expounding the Marian doctrine contained in the private revelations of the great mystic Maria Valtorta, it seems good to me to do a general introduction on private revelations.

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IV. PRIVATE REVELATIONS

I will explain them in three points: 1. What they are; 2. Their characteristics; 3. Their value.

1. *Public* Revelation and *Private* Revelation

The word "Revelation" is from the Latin *revelare*: which means, literally, to take off a veil, or figuratively, to disclose something hidden. Strictly speaking, then, revelation is the supernatural act by which God communicates to human beings, either directly (by Himself), or indirectly (through an intermediary authorized by God).

Catholic theology has always maintained a clearcut distinction between *public* revelation and *private* revelation.

Public revelation addresses itself to all of humanity as the object of universal faith. It began at the dawn of humanity, with our first parents. . . . [It then went through] two great periods: the Hebrew Old Testament, and the Christian New Testament. It is entirely contained in Holy Scripture and Tradition.

Private revelations, however, are addressed to a single person or to a limited number of persons (therefore not to all of humanity as in the case of public revelation). They are not the object of universal faith. They may be received by means of apparitions, locutions, etc. (which the outer senses can perceive) or of visions, revelations, etc., (which only the inner senses can perceive).[9]

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9. All these mystical phenomena have been described in detail, with case studies and examples, by St. John of the Cross, mystical Doctor, in *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book II, 9-10, 14-24, 25-30; [English translation: Kavanaugh, K., O.C.D., and Rodriguez, O., O.C.D., translators, *The Complete Works of St. John of the Cross*. Washington D.C., Institute of Carmelite Studies, c1964.]

Among private revelations, we may distinguish the *three kinds of visions* which ascetic and mystical writers speak about, that is: *corporeal* visions (perceived by the senses, also called apparitions); *imaginative* visions (perceived in the imagination, either during waking hours or during sleep), and *intellectual* visions (perceived by the intel-

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2. Characteristics of Private Revelations

According to Catholic theology, private revelations are *possible.* Some are found to be *genuine* after due investigation. Actual private revelations are *relatively rare* and *necessarily subordinated to public revelation.* While private revelations are *outside of the deposit of public revelation*, they are *useful.*

a) *Private Revelations are possible*

The very fact that the Church submits private revelations to her judgment implies that she does not reject them *a priori* and therefore considers them possible. She has even allowed and approved some of them. After giving humanity a public, general revelation of Himself, God, obviously, has not necessarily forfeited His freedom to 'add,' as He pleases, some private, particular revelations which may be less extensive and sometimes completely individualized. For one thing, the richness of God's mystery is inexhaustible. For another, He has never renounced direct contacts with souls to instruct them. Joel's well known prophecy about the Messianic rule gives support to this: "And it shall come to pass after this, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy: your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions" (2:28 [Douay]). Private revelations are therefore possible.

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lect, either during sleep, or waking hours). Some visions exhibit two or three of these characteristics at the same time. *Locutions* (or supernatural words) also exist in three kinds: *corporeal* or auricular) locutions (perceived by the sense of hearing), *imaginative* locutions (perceived in the imagination) and *intellectual* locutions (directly perceived by the intellect). These *locutions*, as well as *visions*, may come from Christ, the Blessed Virgin, Angels, saints or demons.

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b) *Some are genuine*

There are at least some authentic private revelations, since the Church herself allows them to be spread. Some (as for instance the revelation of the Sacred-Heart to St. Marguerite-Marie Alacoque) have been the foundation of liturgical, therefore official worship. There are three sets of *criteria* to determine the *authenticity* of a private revelation and to discern any human elements that might have crept in. They concern: the *person* who receives the revelation; its *content* and object; and the *effects* which it produces.

i) *The person*

The person favoured with revelations must be judged in regards to his or her *natural* and *supernatural* qualities. *Natural* qualities are: *temperament* (balanced, or neurotic, hysterical, etc.); *intellectual* tendencies (common sense, or fantasy, exaltation, etc.); and *moral* dispositions (sincerity, or a tendency to exaggerate or make up stories, etc.). *Supernatural* qualities are: solid virtue, obedience, and, in particular, sincere and profound humility (not vying for recognition).[10] Positive natural and supernatural qualities in an individual do not suffice to prove the authenticity of a revelation. They can, however, be useful in judging the value of the declarations made by the person claiming to be graced with revelations. On the other hand, if these characteristics prove to be negative, the validity of the revelation cannot be defended. (See Lam-

10. There are cases of people who, in order to draw attention to themselves, invented revelations, etc. For example, the Franciscan Magdalene of the Cross, of Cordova, in the 16th century, gave herself to the devil during her childhood, became a religious at 17, and was abbess three times. With the devil's help, she simulated every mystical phenomenon (ecstasies, revelations, often verified prophecies, levitation, stigmata). But one day, thinking her end was near, and full of remorse, she confessed her simulation and retracted everything. She was exorcized and shut in in another convent of her order (see Poulain, *Grâces d'oraison*, Ch. XXI, #36; [English translation: *Graces of Interior Prayer*. St. Louis, 1950].

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bertini, *De Servorum Dei beatificatione et canonizatione,* vol.III, ch.51, #3).

ii) *The content*

The second criterion for the authenticity of a private revelation is its content. Every revelation which is *really* (and not just apparently) contrary to the faith, good morals or decency, must inevitably be rejected, because God cannot contradict Himself and teach things that are contrary to teachings of the Church, the official guardian of the faith deposit. This holds as well for whatever opposes the unanimous teaching of the Fathers and theologians (but not in the case of controversial *opinions*). Finally, requests for things that are *impossible* to do cannot be held to come from God.[11] If, on the other hand, the content of a private revelation is orthodox and moreover exceeds the writer's natural competence, we must see it as a positive criterion of its supernatural origin.

iii) *The effects*

The third criterion to establish the authenticity of a private revelation resides in *the effects* which it produces. We can tell the tree by its fruits. Authentic, true revelations produce serenity and peace; false ones produce distress, sadness, discouragement, etc., fruits of the devil's tree. *True* revelations strengthen the soul in its virtues, particularly humility; false ones, on the other hand, generate pride (see St. Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle, Sixth Mansion,* ch.VIII).

It is necessary to keep in mind that a revelation may be *authentic,* in other words true in its substance, but false in other respects. This is mainly due to the *seers'*

11. For instance, once the devil appeared to St. Catherine of Bologna under the form of the Crucified Christ, and ordered her, under the pretext of perfection, to do impossible things, with the intention of throwing her into despair (see the Bollandists, March 9).

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(unconscious) mixing of their own human and natural activity with God's divine, supernatural action. This happens especially in revelations written by people with extraordinarily lively imaginations. As a result of such infiltration, it may happen that private revelations will contain errors from the point of view of physical sciences,[12] historical disciplines,[13] or theological ideas, prejudices or systems,[14] etc. Thus, some things born of the mystic's own imagination are given as though they were divinely revealed. Now God is not obliged to correct various prejudices or scientific errors that may be found in the mystics' minds, since "He has in view their spiritual welfare, not their *intellectual formation*".[15]

c) *Private Revelations are relatively rare*

They are indeed extraordinary supernatural interventions, and therefore, uncommon and infrequent. This is why the Church has always treated alleged revelations with great care, caution, and extreme circumspection. Her approval, when it is granted, must be understood *negatively* (in the sense that in those writings, there is nothing contrary to the faith or morals), rather than positively.

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12. For example, Venerable Maria de Agreda, influenced by Ptolemy's system, believed it was revealed to her that at the moment of the Word's Incarnation, the eleven heavens of this erroneous system opened themselves, to revere the Word as It descended to become flesh in Mary's womb (see her *Mystical City of God*. Washington, N.J., Ave Maria Institute, 1971. Vol.2, #128 [p.103])

13. Some seers, for example, confused their own pious meditations (on various apocrypha) with their revelations. As a result of this, they wrote details that contradict historical documents or other private revelations. One has the Blessed Virgin die in Jerusalem, another in Ephesus; one has Her raised three days after Her burial, another, fifteen days later.

14. For instance, some Dominican and Franciscan mystics conform themselves respectively to Thomist or Scotist systems in their revelations. Benedict XIV (see Lambertini, *op.cit.*, vol.III, ch.53, #16) analyzed an ecstasy of St. Catherine of Siena, a Dominican, in which the Blessed Virgin would have told her that She was not conceived without the stain of original sin (in accordance with Thomistic theory).

15. See A. Tanquerey, *Précis de théologie ascétique et mystique*, Desclée, #1506; [English translation: *The Spiritual Life. A Treatise on Ascetical and Mystical Theology*. (2nd and revised edition). Tournai, Belgium, Desclée, 1930.]

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d) *They are necessarily subordinated to Public Revelation*

Alleged private revelations must be judged in the light of Public Revelation: if they conform to it, they may be *true;* if they are opposed to it, they must be held *false;* and if their conformity is doubtful, they must be regarded as *doubtful* (that is, neither necessarily true or false). What is uncertain and debatable (private revelations) is judged in the light of what is certain and indisputable (Public Revelation). It is not Public Revelation which depends on private revelations, but private revelations which depend on Public Revelation.

e) *They are outside of the deposit of Public Revelation*

Private revelations cannot add anything substantially new to Public Revelation. Even when private revelations are authenticated, the Church does not oblige the faithful to believe in them (as she does for Public Revelation). That is why the Church has never considered those who refuse to believe in them as heretics. Nevertheless, it may be imprudent and foolhardy to reject them. Even if these revelations really are of divine origin, only the people who are favoured with them are obliged to believe in them. Also obliged to believe are those who think that their historical and theological reality is certain. It is to the point to believe in them by purely human belief, however, and not by catholic faith. Benedict XIV declared: "What should we think of private revelations approved by the Church, like, for example, those of St. Hildegarde, St. Bridget, and St. Catherine of Siena? . . . We must not and cannot give, even to approved private revelations, an adherence of Catholic faith, but only an assent of human belief according to the rules of prudence, when these rules present these revelations as probable and devoutly believ-

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able." (Lambertini, *op.cit.*, vol.III, ch.53, #15; see vol.II, ch.32, #11).

f) *Private revelations are useful*

Though they do not add and cannot add anything substantially new to public revelation (already complete in Christ), we should not regard private revelations as useless. In fact, they are very useful to the souls of those they are communicated to. In several ways: they nourish and develop the Church's faith and piety; they promote a greater intelligence of the truth and documents of public revelation. By means of private revelations, God helps us draw a greater profit from public revelation.

3. The Value of Private Revelations

In regards to the value of private revelations, there are three opinions. Two of them are extremist and oppose one another; the other is an intermediate position.

The first extremist opinion is that of the *Centuriators of Magdeburg*. These were Protestants who rejected every private revelation and did not even give it a purely human belief.

Others, on the other hand, believe that private revelations on the mysteries may be the object not only of human belief, but also of *divine* faith. The only condition is that the probability of their authenticity be admitted.[16] This is the opinion which Cardinal Ximenes O.F.M. advanced in his (*Annotationes de mystica Civitate Dei*, annot.5, 8). For support, he quoted Cardinal De Lugo (*De Fide*, disp.1, #240), Ripalda (disp.7, sect. 2), Mastri

16. The following opinion was condemned by Blessed Innocent XI: "Assent to faith is supernatural and useful to salvation with only the probable knowledge of revelation, even with the fear by which one fears lest God has not spoken." (Denzinger-Schönmetzer, #2121; English translation: Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*. London, Herder, c1957, #1171).

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(*De virtutibus theologalibus*, disp. 6, q.10, art.2, #299) and Panger (*De Fide*, disp. 3, #24). Christophorus of Vega even maintained that a private revelation made to St. Bridget would have been sufficient grounds for the sovereign Pontiff to end the controversy as to whether Mary was conceived with or without original sin. With no further proof the Pope could have defined the Immaculate Conception as a faith dogma, he claimed. (See *Theologia Mariana*, Naples, 1866, vol.1, p.136).

Ordinarily, however, theologians adopt an intermediate position between those two extremes and think that private revelations concerning either dogmatic or moral truths, are worthy of *human* belief but not divine faith.

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A Bird's-Eye View of Valtorta's Mariology

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I. CHARACTERISTICS OF VALTORTA'S MARIOLOGY

On January 6, 1960, the *Osservatore Romano* published an article about *Il Poema dell'Uomo-Dio* as well as a stern censure against it.[17] However, in the article it frankly admitted that we can find in this work "lessons in Marian Theology which show a complete knowledge of the latest studies by present day specialists on the matter . . . . These theological lessons are written in the very terms which a professor of our day would use." The article went so far as to insinuate that a knowledgeable Marian theologian could have helped Valtorta to write her work! This admitted that the Marian doctrine in this work is accurate; which is undeniable. But, it is also undeniable that Maria Valtorta never read a Mariological treatise. She never took courses or lessons on that subject, nor was there a Mariologist to suggest to her what she wrote on the Blessed Virgin.

Maria Valtorta did not invent her Mariology on her own; that much is obvious. Nor is it in the slightest possible that it could be the devil's invention. As Most Reverend Carinci, Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, cleverly put it: "the devil has too little in common with the Blessed Virgin" (*Poema*, IX, 219, note 69). As we shall see, Maria Valtorta's writings constitute the most melodious hymn rising from earth to the noble Queen of Heaven.

17. Oddly enough, the officials who issued this censure were not even aware of Pope Pius XII's declaration on February 26, 1948, during the special audience he had granted Fr. Berti and two witnesses. (See note 2.) Within one year, Fr. Berti was able to tell the newly appointed officials of the audience. Within weeks, the censure was tacitly acknowledged to have been invalid and permission was granted to publish the second Italian edition of *Il poema dell'Uomo-Dio.* [Editor.]

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"My dear daughter," [the Virgin Mary told Maria Valtorta,] "write about Me. All your grief will be comforted" (*Poema*, I, 9). [Jesus said:] "Find your happiness in My Mother!" (Quad. 43, p.699 [Dec. 26]).

She obeyed, she wrote and she found her delight in Mary.

There are basically three characteristics of Valtorta's Mariology:

1. It is a *new* Mariology in several respects;
2. It is a *vivid* Mariology, for various reasons;
3. It is an eminently *biblical* Mariology.

1. A New Mariology

Valtorta's Mariology is *new* in several respects. It sheds more light on *old*, traditional Mariology as it completes and renews it (always, however, "in eodem sensu eademque sententia"[18]).

One of the many reasons which led our divine Master to give us *Il Poema dell'Uomo-Dio* is:

"To restore both the characters of the Son of Man and of Mary back to their original truth. They were true children of Adam according to flesh and blood, but of Adam from when he was innocent" (*Poema*, X, p.362).

The idea is to restore our perception of Christ and Mary. This restoration implies the overcoming of obvious omissions in the Canonical Books about the Blessed Virgin.

Jesus Himself told Maria Valtorta:

"The Gospels had described Me well enough to save souls, at least. The Blessed Virgin, however, was little known. Her personality was described incompletely; too many things were left in the dark. *Now I have revealed Her.* I Myself have given you this perfect account of

18. "In the same sense and along the same line of thought."

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My Mother. She is the Glory of Orderliness. . . . Her name adorns the Orderliness [of all things]. . ." (Text dictated on Jan. 6, 1949).

The goal of this extended knowledge of Mary is to increase our love for Her. The Blessed Virgin told Maria Valtorta:

"Presently you are a child who does not know much about Me, your Mother, but one day you will know many things about Me. You will no longer know Me as one knows a nameless, distant star from its ray of light. Nor will you know Me only as an ideal or idealized being. You will know Me as a *living* and loving reality. You will know the heart of the Mother of God and the dear Mother of Jesus. I am a woman who understands the sufferings of women; I understand because I was not spared the worst sufferings of all. To understand the sufferings of others, I have only to remember My own. When you see all this, you will love Me as I loved My Son, with your whole being" (*Quad. '43*, p.639 [Dec.8]).

This explains why Maria Valtorta, as a writer, spared neither labour nor sacrifice.

"I don't feel well at all," [she admitted]. "To write wears me out. After writing, I turn into a rag doll. But I don't hold back: I want to make other people know Her better and love Her better. My shoulders hurt? My heart fails? I get headaches? My temperature goes up? So what! As long as Mary is known, beautiful and lovable as I see Her, thanks to God's goodness and Hers too, that's enough for me" (*Quad.'44*, p.381 [June 7]).

Maria Valtorta's work, going in Italian under the title of *Il poema dell'Uomo-Dio*, could just as well have been called *Il poema of the Mother of God.* Besides restoring and completing the evangelical form of Christ, it also restores and completes Mary's.

We could also say that Maria Valtorta's Mariology is *new*, because it presents the Blessed Virgin in a new light, it presents Her as a *new* creature. While apparently similar to all other pure creatures,[19] in reality She is very

19. The expression *pure creature* refers to any creature except the humanity of Jesus. See note 35 on page 63 [Editor].

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different. She is a creature always engulfed in the infinite light of Her Creator, in the light of the One God in three Persons. She is a creature surrounded with an exceptional and fascinating splendour which emanates from Her unique mission. God

"conceived Her, gathering all graces in Her. She is the Virgin. She is the Only One. She is the Perfect One. The Complete One. Conceived as such [by God]. Generated as such. Remained such. Crowned such. Eternally such. She is the Virgin. She is the {abyss} of intangibility, of purity, of grace that is lost in the Abyss from which it emerged: in God: most perfect Intangibility, Purity, Grace" (*Poema*, I, 37).

Finally, Maria Valtorta's Mariology is *new*, because she presents the Blessed Virgin in a new form, with new developments and new, attractive images.

One example of new developments in Maria Valtorta's writings is the famous classical parallel Eve/Mary. None of the Fathers or ecclesiastical writers, not even all of the Fathers and writers put together, have developed this parallel in such a captivating, expansive, or complete a way as Maria Valtorta did. What is amazing is that she was totally independent of these traditional sources: they were totally unknown to her.

Let me quote one instance of new Marian images in Valtorta's writings.

"As a round fishpond in which the water moves and yet, never flows to the mouth, so Mary was the most pure waters of a sealed fountain. Having gushed forth from the incandescent fervour of Eternal Thought, She flowed along serene river banks, carrying peace and purity. She then reentered God to welcome Him and bear His Son. She came in the midst of wild sands to bring the Light, the Truth and the Life to the desert of hearts. Once Her mission was accomplished, She was carried, like water evaporated by the sun, up to the Mystical womb that had given birth to Her *for you*, so that She would give birth to Salvation. That is where She is now. She is the inviolate Fountain of purity. She is Perfection's only worthy mirror. Perfection forgets everything that is offensive when He looks at

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the Immaculate. . ." (*Lezioni sull'Epistola di Paolo ai Romani* [A Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans], p.35-36).[20]

The image drawn here is a kind of circular movement, from God to God.

2. A Vivid Mariology

Valtorta's Mariology does not contemplate the Virgin Mary in an icy, abstract stratosphere, but in the fullness of Her concrete womanly reality. Though outstanding, She is a woman at once ideal and real. Her reality is that of a virginal wife who inspires others to become or remain virginal, and a mother full of tenderness, love and suffering. This Mariology presents a *living and acting Virgin Mary* who thinks, meditates, speaks, and acts in the most diverse life situations. In this account, the Virgin Mary has a human mind filled with divine light, and a human heart overflowing with divine love. Wherever She goes, whatever She does, She brings a whiff of heavenly perfume: that of Her eminent virtues, that especially of Her exquisite goodness and unlimited mercy. While apparently like all other women, She is actually a miracle of physical and moral beauty. She is a Woman Who walks on the earth with Her spirit and heart always centered on Heaven. A prodigious Woman. A Woman of paradise, even while still of the earth; a perpetual delight, support and comfort for Her divine Son and certainly worthy of Him.

Maria Valtorta not only makes the Blessed Virgin known to us, she also makes Her close to us. She almost

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20. Commentary on Romans 1: 3-4. It should be noted that Maria Valtorta claimed that her commentary on the Epistle to the Romans was dictated to her directly by the Holy Spirit. She called Him "Spirito Santo," "Autore Santissimo," or "Dolce Ospite" (respectively the Holy Spirit, the Most Holy Author, or the Sweet Guest). [Publisher — Kolbe's.]

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enables us to see Her, making us feel as though we lived with Her in the gentlest intimacy.

Such are the Mary and Mariology which emerge from Maria Valtorta's writings: a living Mary who gives us a living, life-giving Mariology.

3. An Eminently Biblical Mariology

As surely as it is *new* in many respects and *life-giving* for various reasons, Valtorta's Mariology is also *eminently biblical.*

The Bible is the soul, thread, and marrow of Valtorta's Mariology. Let it suffice to say that *most* of the Bible appears in the *Poema*'s text or footnotes. All 73 books of the Old and New Testaments are represented; 1166 of their 1334 chapters (including the 150 Psalms) are explicitly or implicitly contained. Skimming through the biblical index of the *Poema*[21] suffices to convince one that Valtorta's work continuously speaks in biblical language: God's own language.

Every biblical passage concerning Mary, in both Testaments, from the Book of Genesis (3:15) to the Book of Revelations (ch. 12), is highlighted in Valtorta's Mariology. *Allegedly antimarian* passages are all included, but with their proper interpretation, fit to dispel any shadow around Mary's luminous figure.

"God promised both a Messiah, that is a Redeemer, *and* a Woman who would be free from concupiscence. She would punish the Betrayer when She gives birth to the One who overcomes sin and death [Gen 3:15]. As centuries went by, this promise was heard more and more clearly, with increasingly clearer details. Many symbols and voices repeated this promise as centuries went by. . ."

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21. *Indice biblico dell'opera* ***Il Poema dell'Uomo-Dio***, painstakingly compiled by Edmea Dusio (Pisani, Isola del Liri, 1970).

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(Lezioni sull'Epistola di Paolo ai Romani [A Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans], p.97).

We must pay special attention to the allegedly *anti-marian* passages found in the four Gospels. They clear the path for a systematic exposition of Marian doctrine. There are four such passages, namely: a) *a passage in St. Matthew, St. Mark and St. Luke* about Jesus' alleged disavowal of His Mother (Mt 12:46-50; Mk 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21); b) *a passage in St. Luke* where Mary and Joseph wondered about, and did not understand, everything which was said of the Child Jesus (Lk 2:33; 41-52); c) *another passage in St. Luke* on Jesus' answer to the woman who, to honour Him, honoured His Mother (Lk 11:27-28); and d) *a passage in St. John* about Jesus' answer to His Mother at the wedding in Cana (Jn 2:2-4).

a) St. Matthew 12:46-50; St. Mark 3:31-35; St. Luke 8:19-21.

Mary says [to the Seer]: "In the Gospel, there are two more sentences about Me that people do not interpret very well. Let Me explain them to you.

"Matthew says: 'As He was yet speaking . . . behold His Mother and His brethren stood without, seeking to speak to Him. And one said to Him: *Behold Your Mother and Your brethren [are] seeking You*. But He answering . . . said: *Who is My Mother, and who are My brethren? . . . Behold My Mother and My brethren: whosoever shall do the will of My Father*.'[22]

"Is Jesus rejecting His Mother? No. Rather, He is praising Her because She did the Father's will perfectly. My Son Jesus knew very well whose will I obeyed. I had made God's will Mine, and I did not recoil from it. Every minute that went by I was reminded: 'This shall end up on Calvary.' This thought was like the shooting pain of a nail driven into My heart. Jesus knew very well that I had deserved

22. Elsewhere in the work we find this other saying of Jesus: "I tell you that I have no closer relative than those who do the will of My Father . . ." (*Poema*, II, 90).

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to be the Mother of God because I had done the Father's will. If I had not done it, Jesus would not have had Me for a Mother.

"As a result, I was the first of all His disciples. Not only timewise, but also knowledgewise, because the Word of God had been teaching Me ever since I began bearing Him in My womb. The bonds that tied Me to Jesus were much closer than blood: they were supernatural. When Jesus told the crowd of *His Mother,* then, He meant it in a divine sense. The crowd knew Me as His Mother in a *human* sense, but His *divine* words revealed My true identity, as *true Mother, because I gave life to the Father's will . . .*" (*Quad. '43,* p.631-632 [Dec. 7])[23]

b) St. Luke 2: 33, 41-52.

This concerns the surprise and incomprehension Mary and Joseph experienced regarding Jesus.

Mary told the Seer:

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23. Another episode in the work echoes this passage:

Mary, Joseph and Simon elbow their way through the crowd with difficulty. [Both Joseph and Simon are Alpheus' sons, that is, our Lord's cousins.] While Mary is thoroughly kind, Joseph is very angry and Simon is utterly embarrassed. They arrive near Jesus.

Joseph attacks Him at once: "You are crazy! You are offending everybody. You do not respect even Your Mother. But I am here now and I will stop You. Is it true that You are wandering about as a workman? If it is true, why do You not work in Your own shop, and thus provide for Your Mother? Why do You lie saying that Your task is to preach, You idle and ungrateful man, when You work for money with other people? I think that You are really possessed by a demon misleading You. Reply to me!"

Jesus turns round and takes little Joseph by the hand, He draws him close to Himself and holding him up by his armpits He says: "I worked to provide food for this innocent child and his relatives and persuade them that God is good. It was a sermon on humility and charity for Korazim. And not only for Korazim. But also for you, Joseph, My unfair brother. But I forgive you because I know that you have been bitten by snakes. And I forgive you, too, Simon, who are so changeable. I have nothing to forgive My Mother or be forgiven by Her, because Her judgement is just. Let the world do what it wants. I do what God wants. And with the blessing of My Father and {of My} Mother I am happier than I would be if the whole world hailed Me king according to the world. Come, Mother. Do not weep. They do not know what they are doing. Forgive them."

"Oh! My Son! I know. You know. There is nothing else to be said..." And Jesus blesses the crowd, and holding Mary with His right hand and Joseph with His left one, He goes towards the staircase and is the first to climb it. (*Poema,* IV, 944).

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"When Luke described the Presentation in the Temple, he wrote that Jesus' 'father and Mother were wondering at those things which were spoken concerning Him' [Lk 2:33]. Both spouses, however, were surprised in a different way.

"The Spirit, My Spouse, had revealed Jesus' whole future to Me. I was marvelling *in a supernatural way.* I was worshipping the Lord's will. He had taken on a body to redeem mankind and was revealing Himself to those who lived in a spiritual way. I was marvelling, once more, that God had chosen Me, His humble handmaid, to be the Mother of incarnate Truth. Joseph, too, was marvelling, but *in a human way.* He did not know anything besides what Scriptures had told him and what the Angel had revealed to him. As for Me, I did not tell him anything. *The secrets of the Most High were laid securely in the sealed Ark, in the Holy of Holies. I alone, the supreme Priestess, knew them, and God's glory shone in a blinding way and kept them hidden from the eyes of men. They were splendid depths and only the Virgin's eyes, kissed by God's spirit, could gaze at them.*

"This is why Joseph and I were surprised. We were *equally* amazed, but *in a different way.*

"The other passage in Luke must be interpreted in the same way: 'They *understood not* the word that He spoke unto them' (2:50).

"*I* understood. I already knew those things, and, besides, the Father allowed My motherly anguish. *But the Father did not conceal the sublime meaning of My Son's words.* I did not say a thing about it, however, so as not to hurt Joseph's feelings. The fullness of grace had not been granted to him.

"I was the Mother of God, but that did not excuse Me from being a respectful wife towards Joseph. He was a good, loving companion for Me and a watchful brother. There was no shortcoming in our family in any area of our lives for any reason whatsoever. We loved one another, and we were concerned, in a holy way, with one thing only: our Son.

"Everything Jesus had received from My dear Joseph, He abundantly returned to him when He consoled him at the hour of his death. Only Jesus could bring such comfort.

"Jesus is the model for children, as Joseph is the model husband. I suffered much because of the world and for the world. *But the only tears that My holy Son and My just spouse ever caused to well up in My eyes were due to the sufferings that they were undergoing.*

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"When Joseph no longer was at My side and when, on earth, I was given the greatest authority over My Son, I no longer remained quiet. There was no longer any need to let someone think that I did not understand. *No one could be humiliated because I knew more than he did" (Quad.'43,* p.627-628 [Dec. 5]).

c) St. Luke 11:27-28.

This is about the Son's answer to the woman who, to exalt the Son, exalts the Mother.

The Virgin Mary explains it to our Seer:

"Luke says that while Jesus was speaking, a woman said: 'Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the [breasts] which gave You suck.' And My Son answered: 'Rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it.'

"It would not have been fair for Me to brag about the grace of being Jesus' Mother. The Father had created millions and millions of souls, and, in His unfathomable ways, decreed that *Mine* would remain spotless. The Eternal does not want Me to humble Myself in Heaven. He made Me Queen of Heaven on that blessed instant when I left the earth and was seized and embraced by My Son. Ever since We had parted [at the Ascension], I had missed Him deeply, and I had desired Him so much that I was being consumed like a burning lamp. But if God now allowed Me to, I would forever remain prostrate before His splendour to submit to Him completely, in remembrance of His great goodness in decreeing that My soul, before any other soul, should be baptized, not with water and salt, but with the fire of His love.

"I could not puff Myself up because Jesus was fed at My breasts. He could have chosen to come down on earth, preach, and redeem mankind without humbling His Divinity by having a child's bodily needs. He ascended to Heaven after accomplishing His mission; in the same way, He could have come down from Heaven with a perfect adult body, ready to perform His mission. (Either way He needed a body, since you are slow-witted bodily beings.) My Son and Lord can do anything. I was only an instrument to make God's real Incarnation more convincing and easier to understand. God the most pure Spirit became a man, Jesus Christ, son of Mary of Nazareth.

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"The reason I became great is that I kept God's word, and refined My soul's senses by remaining totally pure from My childhood on. What filled Me with joy was to listen to the Word, that is, My Son, and 'eat' it as bread and thus uniting Myself to My Lord more and more" (*Quad. '43,* p.632-633 [Dec. 7]).[24]

d) St. John (2:2-4).

This regards Jesus' response to His Mother at the wedding in Cana: "Woman, what is that to Me and to You?" Maria Valtorta quotes this passage as follows: "What is there *still* between Me and You?" The adverb "still" ("più," in Italian) has been added. Valtorta writes as follows:

Jesus explains the meaning of the sentence to me.

"That 'still,' which is omitted by many translators, is the keyword of the sentence and explains its true meaning.

"I was the Son, submissive to My Mother, up to the moment when the will of My Father told Me that the hour had come when I was to be the Master. *From the moment My mission started, I was*

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24. In *Il Poema dell'Uomo-Dio,* the same incident occurred after Jesus' discourse in Gerasha, which ended as follows:

". . . Citizens of {Gerasha}: build the Kingdom of God within yourselves and in your town."

The thrilling voice of a woman is clearly heard like the song of a skylark above the whispering of the admiring crowd, and it sings a new beatitude, that is the glory of Mary: "Blessed be the womb that bore You and the breast that suckled You."

Jesus turns towards the woman who extolled His Mother admiring Her Son. He smiles, because He is pleased with the praise for His Mother. But He then says: "More blessed are those who listen to the word of God and practise it. Do that, woman."

He then blesses the crowds and goes towards the country, followed by the apostles who ask Him: "Why did You say that?"

"Because I tell you solemnly that in Heaven they do not use the same measure as is used on the earth. And My Mother will be blessed not so much because of Her immaculate soul as for listening to the word of God and practising it through obedience. It was a prodigy of the Creator 'that Mary's soul was immaculate.' And He is to be praised for that. But the 'let what you have said be done to me' is a prodigy of My Mother. Her merit therefore is great. So great that the Saviour of the world came only because of Her {ability to listen} to God, speaking through Gabriel's lips, and because of Her will to practise the word of God, without weighing the difficulties and the immediate and future sorrows connected with Her assent. You can thus see that She is My blessed Mother not only because She bore and {breastfed} Me, but because She listened to the word of God and practised it through obedience." (*Poema* IV, 1082-1083).

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no longer the Son submissive to My Mother, I was the Servant of God. My moral ties with My Mother were broken. They had turned into higher bonds, all of a spiritual nature. I always called Mary, My Holy 'Mother.' Our love suffered no interruptions, neither did it even cool down, nay, *it was never so perfect as when I was separated from Her as by a second birth and She gave Me to the world and for the world, as the Messiah and Evangeliser. Her third sublime mystical maternity took place when She bore Me to the cross in the torture of Golgotha, and made Me the Redeemer of the world.*

"'What is there *still* between Me and You?' Before I was Yours, only Yours. You gave Me orders, and I obeyed You. I was 'subject' to You. *Now I belong to My mission.*

"Did I not say: 'He, who lays his hand on the plough and looks back to bid farewell to those who are staying, is not fit for the Kingdom of God'? [Lk 9:61-62] I had laid My hand on the plough not to cut the ground with the ploughshare, but to open the hearts of men and sow there the word of God. I was to take My hand away from the plough only when they would tear it away to nail it to the Cross and to open with My torturing nail My Father's heart, out of which forgiveness for mankind was to flow.

"That 'still,' forgotten by most, meant this: 'You were everything for Me, Mother, as long as I was only Jesus of Mary of Nazareth, and You are everything in My spirit; but since I became the expected Messiah, I belong to My Father. Wait for a little while and once My mission is over, I will be, once again, *entirely* Yours. You will hold Me once again in Your arms, as when I was a little child, and no one will ever again contend with You for Your Son. Your Son will be considered as the disgrace of mankind; My mortal remains will be thrown at You, to bring on You the shame of being the mother of a criminal. After this You will have Me once again, triumphant, and finally You will have Me for ever when You are triumphant in Heaven. But now I belong to all these men. And I belong to the Father, Who sent Me to them'" (*Poema*, II, 76).

We may ask ourselves what is so "antimarian" in the four texts discussed above. . . Duly interpreted, they are, rather, a hymn of praise to Mary.

To conclude, Jesus told Maria Valtorta:

"Find your happiness in My Mother!" (*Quad. '43*, p.699 [Dec. 26]).

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After inviting her to plunge into "the heavenly contemplation of Mary's Virginity," He added:

"You will emerge from this experience with your soul as fresh as if you too were created at the moment by the Father . . . . You will emerge with your soul filled with light, because you will plunge into God's masterpiece. You will emerge with your whole being saturated in love, because you will have understood the degree to which God can love" (*Poema*, I, 29).

The same thing will happen to us, if we plunge into Mary as explained by Maria Valtorta. Our soul will feel refreshed, filled with light, and overflowing with love.

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II. FIVE MARIAN PORTRAITS

Before presenting a synthesis of Valtorta's Mariology, it seems appropriate to sketch an overview of Mary's remarkable personality as it emerges from Maria Valtorta's *Il Poema dell'Uomo-Dio*. Let us contemplate five Marian portraits and admire the many sunbeams which emanate from this transcendent being.

Reading through *Il Poema dell'Uomo-Dio*, we discover five truly evocative scenes which depict Mary's moral traits and give Her true theological, ascetic portrait.

The first four portraits were drawn by Her divine Son, the supreme artist; the fifth one, by a young Jewish prophetess, named Sabea of Carmel.

1. The First Portrait

"THIS IS MY MOTHER!"

In the third year of His Public Ministry, in His small, humble home in Nazareth, Jesus speaks about His Mother to the Apostles, the shepherds and the women disciples and other people, approximately forty people in all. He draws Her moral portrait.

"I wanted you to be here {*so I could tell you about*} *Mary*. Many of you know Mary as the 'mother'; some as the 'spouse.' But no one knows Her as the Virgin Mary. I want you to become acquainted with Her in this garden in bloom [behind Her house in Nazareth], to which your hearts desire to come when you are compelled to be far away, as to a resting place after your apostolate work.

"I listened to you apostles, disciples and relatives speak, and I heard your impressions, your recollections and your statements concerning My Mother. I will transfigure all that, which is admirable although still very human, into a supernatural knowledge. Because My Mother is to be transfigured, before Me, in the eyes of the most deserving, to show Her *as She is*. You see a woman. A woman dif-

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ferent from other women, because of Her holiness, but in actual fact you see Her as a soul enveloped in a body, just like all women Her sisters. But now I wish to reveal to you *the soul* of My Mother. Her true and eternal beauty" (*Poema*, V, 268-269).

After saying that, Jesus turns towards His Mother:

"Come here, Mother. Do not blush. Do not withdraw shyly, sweet dove of God. Your Son is the Word of God and He can speak of You and of Your mystery, of Your mysteries, o sublime Mystery of God. Let us sit down here, in the pleasant shade of the trees in blossom near the house, near Your holy room. Thus! Let us lift this fluttering curtain, so that waves of holiness and Paradise may come out of this virginal room, *to saturate us all with Your virtues. . .* Yes. Me as well. That I may {be perfumed with} You, o perfect Virgin, so that I may be able to bear the stench of the world, in order that I may see purity after saturating My eyes with Your Purity. . . Marziam, John, Stephen come here, and you, women disciples, stand directly in front of the open door of the chaste abode of the most Chaste amongst women. And you, My friends, stand behind. And You, My beloved Mother, here, beside Me.

"A little while ago I said to you: 'the eternal beauty of the soul of My Mother.' I am the Word, and thus I can make use of words without erring. I said: eternal, not immortal. And I deliberately said so. He is immortal who, after being born, does not die. Thus the souls of the just are immortal in Heaven, the souls of sinners are immortal in Hell, because a soul, once it has been created, does not die but to grace. But a soul has life, it exists from that moment that God thinks it. [Thus it exists in God's thought.] It is the Thought of God that creates it. The soul of My Mother was thought by God *from everlasting.* It is therefore *eternal* [in God's thought] *in its beauty, in which God poured every perfection to receive delight and comfort from it.*

"It is written in the Book of our ancestor Solomon, who foresaw You, Mary, and can thus be called Your Prophet:

'God possessed Me from the beginning of His works,
from the very beginning, before Creation.
From everlasting I was firmly set,
from the beginning, before the Earth came into being . . . .'
[Proverbs 8:22-31].

Yes, Mother, with Whom God, Immense, Sublime, Virgin, Uncreated, was pregnant and carried You like a most sweet burden,

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rejoicing at feeling You stir within Him, when with Your smiles He created the Universe! He laboriously gave birth to You to give You to the world, most gentle soul, born of the {Supreme Virgin} to be the 'Virgin,'[25] the Perfection of Creation, the Light of Paradise, the Advice of God, Who looking at You forgave Sin, because You alone, by Yourself *can love as all Mankind put together cannot love*. In You is the Forgiveness of God! {In You is God's Medicine, O caress on the Eternal One's wound} that man inflicted on God! In You is the {Health} of the world, {O} Mother of the Love Incarnate and of the granted Redeemer! {O} soul of My Mother! Merged in Love with My Father, I looked at You within Me, o soul of My Mother!... And Your splendour, Your prayer, the idea of being carried by You comforted Me for ever and ever for My destiny of sorrow and inhuman experience of what the corrupted world is for the most Perfect God. Thank You, Mother! When I came [from Heaven] I was already full of Your consolation, I descended perceiving You alone, Your perfume, Your song, Your love... Joy, My joy!

"Now that you know that *one only is the Woman in Whom there is no stain*, that one only Human Being costs the Redeemer no injury, listen to *the second transfiguration of Mary*, the Elect Daughter of God.

"It was a clear afternoon in the month of Adar and the trees were in bloom in the silent kitchen garden, and Mary, Joseph's bride, had picked a flowery branch to replace the one that was in Her room. Mary, taken from the Temple to adorn a house of saints, had recently come to Nazareth. And with Her *soul divided among* Temple, house and Heaven, She was looking at the flowery branch, considering that by means of a similar branch, which had bloomed in an unusual manner, {God had revealed His will to Her. It was} a branch cut off in this garden in the depth of winter and {it} had bloomed as if it were springtime before the Ark of the Lord — perhaps {God,} beaming in His Glory, had warmed it {as the sun}... And She was thinking also that on the day of their wedding Joseph had brought Her other flowers, but never like the first one on the thin petals of which it was written: 'I want You united to Joseph'... She was thinking of many things... And while thinking She

25. "He laboriously gave birth to You to give You to the world, most gentle soul, born of the [Supreme Virgin] to be the Virgin" was changed as follows in D2: "With immense love, God poured You out into a flesh, to give You to the world, most gentle soul, created by the [Supreme Virgin] to be the virginal soul of the Virgin."

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ascended to God. Her hands were busy with distaff and spindle and were spinning a yarn that was thinner than the hair of Her young head...

"Her soul was weaving a carpet of love, moving quickly, like a shuttle on a loom, from the earth to Heaven. From the needs of the house, of Joseph, to those of the soul, of God. And she sang and prayed. And the carpet was forming on the mystical loom, it rolled off from the earth to Heaven, it ascended to get lost up there... Formed with what? With the thin, perfectly strong threads of Her virtues, with the flying thread of the shuttle, which She thought was 'Hers,' whereas it was God's: the shuttle of the will of God, on which was rolled the will of the little, great Virgin of Israel, Unknown to the World, Known to God, rolled and made *one* with the Will of the Lord. And the carpet was adorned with the flowers of love, of purity, with palms of peace and palms of glory, with sweet-smelling violets, with jasmines... Every virtue flowered on the carpet of love, which the Virgin of God unrolled invitingly from the earth to Heaven. And as the carpet was not sufficient She thrust Her heart singing: 'Let My Beloved come into His garden and eat the fruit of His trees. . . . Let My Beloved come down to his garden, to the bed of spices, to pasture in the gardens and gather lilies. I am My Beloved's and My Beloved is Mine. He pastures among the lilies!' [Canticle 5:1; 6:1-2 (2-3)]. And from infinite distance, among torrents of Light, a Voice came that human ear cannot hear and human throat cannot utter. And it said: 'How beautiful You are, My love! How beautiful You are! . . . Your lips distil wild honey . . . You are a garden enclosed, a sealed fountain, My Sister, My promised bride...' [Canticle 4:1, 11-12] and the two voices joined together to sing the eternal truth: 'Love is stronger than death. Nothing can quench or drown our love' [Canticle 8: 6-7]. And the Virgin was thus transfigured when Gabriel descended and called Her back to the Earth, with his ardour, and joined Her {spirit} to Her body again, so that She might hear and understand the request of Him, Who had called Her 'Sister' but wanted Her to be His 'Bride.'

"{So,} the mystery took place there... And a modest woman, the most modest of all women, Who was not even aware of the instinctive incentive of the flesh, {was dazed} before the Angel of God, because even an angel upsets the humility and modesty of the Virgin, and only when She heard him speak She calmed down, and She believed, and She said the word, whereby *'their'* love became Flesh

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and will defeat Death and no flood will be able to quench it or wickedness to submerge it. . ."

Jesus bends gently over Mary Who has slid to His feet, almost ecstatically, in the recollection of the remote hour, shining with a special light, which seems to issue from Her soul, and He asks Her in a low voice: "Which was Your reply, Most Pure Mother, to him who assured You that by becoming Mother of God, You would not lose Your perfect Virginity?"

And Mary, almost in a dream, slowly, smiling, Her eyes shining with joyful tears: "I am the handmaid of the Lord! Let it be done to Me according to your Word" and She reclines Her head on the knees of Her Son, adoring Him.

Jesus covers Her with His mantle, concealing Her from everybody's eyes and He says: "And it was done. All will be done until the end. Until Her next transfiguration and the one after that. She will always be the 'Handmaid of God.' She will always act according to what 'the Word' says. My Mother! *That is My Mother.* And you ought to begin to become fully acquainted with Her holy Figure. . . Mother! Mother! Raise Your face, My beloved. . . Call Your devout admirers back to the Earth, where we are for the time being. . ." He says uncovering Mary after a little while, during which no noise was heard except the humming of bees and the gurgling of the little fountain.

Mary raises Her face wet with tears and whispers: "Why did You do that to Me, Son? The secrets of the King are sacred. . ."

"But the King can reveal them whenever He wishes. Mother, I did it, so that the words of the Prophet may be understood: 'A Woman will enclose the Man in Herself' [Jer 31:21-22], and the words of the other Prophet: The 'Virgin will conceive and give birth to a Son' [Is 7:14]. And also that My disciples, who are struck with horror at too many things that they consider degrading for the Word of God, may have, as counterbalance, many other things confirming them in the joy of being 'Mine.' Thus they will no longer be scandalized and will conquer Heaven. . ." (*Poema*, V, 268-273).

In this marvellous presentation of His Most Holy Mother, Jesus is speaking about four Marian *transfigurations*: the four fundamental brush strokes in this portrait. In the first transfiguration, Mary is shown to us as She exists in all of eternity in God's mind and heart,

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before existing in reality. The second transfiguration takes place at the Annunciation, when God (the incarnate Word) began to exist in Her. In the third (barely sketched) transfiguration, Mary is on Calvary where She becomes Co-Redemptrix, the Mother of Sufferings. With the fourth, at last, Her glorious Assumption in body and soul is faintly suggested.

That was the first portrait. Really divine and worthy of the supreme Artist.

2. The Second Portrait

"HOW DO YOU SEE MARY?"

This second Marian portrait, like the first, was painted in Nazareth, during the third year of Jesus' Public Ministry.

This is the context. Judas Thaddeus, Jesus' cousin and Mary's nephew, turns towards the divine Master and asks Him point blank:

"Brother, tell me. I've been wanting to know something for a long time. *How do You see Mary?* As Mother or as subject? She is Your Mother, but She is a woman and You are God..."

[Jesus answers:] "[I see Her] as a Sister and a Spouse, as God's delightful rest, and as man's comfort. *In Mary, I,* as God and as man, *see everything and have everything*. She was the delight of the Second Person of the Trinity in Heaven, the delight of the Word, of the Father, and of the Spirit, and *She is the delight of the Incarnate God* and will be the delight of the glorified God-Man."

"What a mystery!" the Zealot says, musing. "Twice, God deprived Himself of what delighted Him: You, then Mary? And He gave You both to the Earth..."

"'What great love!' you mean," James says. "Love is what prompted the Trinity to give Jesus and Mary to the Earth."

Thomas asks: "But weren't You afraid — not for Your sake since You are God, but for Your Rose's sake — to entrust Her to men that are all unworthy of protecting Her?"

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"Thomas," [Jesus replies], "the Canticle of Canticles [8: 11-12] will answer you. 'The Peaceful One had a Vineyard and entrusted it to overseers. But they were desecrators, prompted as they were by *the* Desecrator. They would have paid large amounts of money to own it. In other words, they would have tried to seduce it by all means. But the Lord's beautiful Vineyard looked after Herself by Herself. She wanted to yield Her fruits to no one but the Lord. She wanted to open to no one but Him, thus begetting the priceless treasure: the Saviour'" (*Poema*, VI, p.946).

This second portrait also is simple and delightful.

The Blessed Virgin is the delight of the Most Holy Trinity; the joy and consolation of the Incarnate Word, the God-Man; the well guarded Vineyard which yielded all its fruit to the Lord alone and who gave birth to the priceless treasure, the Saviour; and the delight of the glorified God-Man.

3. The Third Portrait

"THE GOLDEN ARK"

Jesus sketched another portrait of His Mother not very long after the first, in a discourse He made in the synagogue in Capernaum about "the living Bread which came down from Heaven" [Jn 6:41]. His audience was scandalized at His words and began to murmur. Jesus replied:

"Why are you grumbling among yourselves? Yes, I am *the son of Mary of Nazareth*, the daughter of Joachim of the house of David, a virgin consecrated in the Temple and then married to Joseph of Jacob, of the house of David. Many of you have known the just parents of Joseph, a royal carpenter, and those of Mary, the Virgin heiress of the royal stock. And you thus say: 'How can He say that He descended from Heaven?' and you become doubtful.

"I remind you of the Prophets who prophesied the Incarnation of the Word. And I remind you that it is a dogma, more for us Israelites than for any other people, that He, Whose name we dare not mention [God], could not become Flesh according to the laws of mankind, and an impoverished mankind at that. The Most Pure

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Uncreated One, if he humiliated Himself by becoming Man for the sake of man, could but choose the womb of a Virgin purer than lilies to clothe His Divinity with Flesh. The Bread that descended from Heaven in the days of Moses, was placed in the gold Ark, which supported the the Mercy Seat and was watched over by Cherubim, behind the veils of the Tabernacle. And the Word of God [the Tables of the Law] was with the Bread [the Manna]. And it was right that it should be so, because the deepest respect is to be paid to the gifts of God and to the tables of His most holy Word. So what will God have prepared for His own Word and for the true Bread that has come from Heaven? A more immaculate and precious Ark than the gold one, to support the precious Mercy Seat of His pure will to immolate Himself, watched over by the cherubim of God, veiled by virginal purity, by perfect humility, sublime charity and all the most holy virtues.

"So? Do you not understand yet that My Paternity is in Heaven, and that, consequently, I come from there?" (*Poema*, V, 325-326).

Here we have a synthesis of the three fundamentals of Mariology:

— Mary's unique mission: to be the Mother of the Word, the Word made flesh, the living Bread come down from heaven for the salvation of humanity;
— Mary's remarkable privileges: She is the virginal Ark, more precious than the one which contained the Manna and the Tables of the Law;
— the exceptional veneration due to this Ark.

The three portraits so far, painted with so much filial love by Christ's divine hand, complement one another and blend into one, full of heavenly light.

4. The Fourth Portrait

"THE SOLITARY FLOWER" OF NAZARETH

We can find another little portrait of the Blessed Virgin by Jesus, when He addressed Himself to Simon the Zealot in the first year of His Public Ministry:

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"There is a Flower [in Nazareth]! There is a Flower that lives solitary, fragrant with purity and love for Her God and Her Son! That is My Mother. You will meet Her, Simon, and then you will be able to tell Me whether there is a creature like Her, also in human grace, on the earth. She is beautiful, but everything is surpassed by what emanates internally from Her. If a brute should divest Her of all Her clothes, should disfigure Her and send Her roving, She would still appear as a Queen in a royal dress, because Her holiness would cover Her as a mantle and confer splendour on Her. The world can give Me all possible evil, but I will forgive the world everything, because to come into the world and redeem it, I had Her, the humble and great Queen of the world. The Queen Whom the world does not know, but through Whom it has received Good and will receive still more throughout centuries.

". . . I solemnly tell you that the true House of God, the Holy Ark, is Her Heart, the veil of which is Her most pure flesh and its embroidery work are all Her virtues" (*Poema*, II, 293).

This little portrait highlights several of Mary's qualities. She is unique and transcends all other creatures: there is no creature like Her. Mary was incomparably beautiful, but more importantly She glowed with inner beauty. Her majestic royalty made Her a Queen surrounded with holiness. Her supremely beneficial work was to give the Supreme Good, the Saviour, to the world. Mary's final trait found in this portrait was Her generous saving influence through the centuries. . . She is "the House of God," "the Holy Ark," decorated with every virtue.

5. The Fifth Portrait

"THE PERFECT HANDMAID OF THE LORD"

This portrait is drawn by a thirty-year old Jewish prophetess of the tribe of Aaron: Sabea of Carmel of Bethleki.

This takes place during the third year of Christ's Public Ministry, at Zaccheus' farm near Jericho. A young

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woman, inspired by God, has just made, with a shrill voice and luminous eyes, the highest praise of Christ, the Redeemer, the Messiah. She is now making a transition to talk about His Mother:

She says:

"Behold your King, o people of God!
Get to know His face!
God's beauty is standing before you.
God's Wisdom is in front of you.
God's Wisdom has taken a mouth to teach you.

"O people of Israel, it is no longer Prophets who tell you about the Un-nameable One.
He Himself, who knows His own mystery, is telling you about God.
He knows God's thoughts.

"He is taking you to His breast, a people who are still children after so many centuries,
to feed you with the milk of God's wisdom,
to turn you into an adult in God.

"To do this, He has taken flesh in a womb.
Yes, in the womb of a Woman of Israel.
In God's and mens' eyes, She is the first among all women.

"She has ravished God's heart with a single one of Her dove's coos [Canticle of Canticles 4: 1-9].
The beauty of Her spirit has charmed the Most High
and He has turned Her into His throne.

"Myriam, the sister of Aaron, sinned,
because sin was found in her [Numbers 12].
Deborah discerned what had to be done,
but she did not do it herself [Judges, ch.4 & 5].
Jahel was strong,
but she stained herself with blood [Judges 4: 17-23; 5:24-27].
Judith was a just woman and feared the Lord.
God was in her words and He allowed her to act so as to save Israel.
But out of love for the fatherland,
she had crafty recourse to murder [Judith, ch. 8 to 16].

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"But the Woman who gave birth to God is above all those women,
because She is *God's handmaid*
and She serves Him without sinning.
She is completely pure, innocent and beautiful.
She is God's lovely Star, from the time She rises to the time She sets.
She is wholly beautiful and pure,
and shines through and through, so as to be both Star and Moon.
She is the Light that helps men find the Lord.

"Unlike Myriam, Aaron's sister, She does not walk in front of the Holy Ark or follow it,
because She Herself is the Ark.
She runs over the face of the earth
and saves people from the stormy flood of sins that covers the earth.
For whoever enters the Ark finds the Lord.

"She is a spotless Dove who takes wing
and brings back to men the olive bough of peace [Gen 8:6-12],
because She is the fair Olive Tree [Ecclesiasticus 24:14].

"Though She remains quiet,
Her silence says more and achieves more than Deborah, Jahel [Judges, ch.4 & 5], and Judith [Judith, ch. 8 to 16].
She does not suggest warfare,
She does not urge massacres,
She spills no blood but Her own which is much more noble and with which She made Her Son.
Poor Mother! Sublime Mother!. . .

"Though Judith greatly respected the Lord,
a man took Her as one picks a choice bloom [Judith 8:2].
But the inviolable Blossom gave Herself to the Most High,
and God's fire descended into the cup of that sweet Lily.
Thus a Woman's womb has contained and borne God's Power, Wisdom and Love.
Glory to this Woman!
Sing, o you women of Israel,
sing Her praises!"

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The young woman stops as if her voice was worn out. Actually, I wonder how she could speak so loud for so long.

The scribes say: "She's crazy! She's crazy! Jesus, tell her to be quiet. She's crazy or possessed. Order the spirit that got a hold of her to go away."

"I cannot. That is none other than God's Spirit, and God does not drive Himself away."

"You won't do it because she's praising You and Your Mother and that flatters Your pride."

"Scribe, think about what you know of Me, and you will see that I am not a proud man."

"Yet, only a demon could talk through her to speak so highly of a woman!. . ." another Scribe says. "Women! What are women in Israel? What does 'woman' mean for Israel? It can only mean sin in God's eyes. She was seduced and she seduced Adam. If it wasn't for the faith, it would be hard to imagine that women have souls. Women aren't even allowed to go near the Holy because of their impurity. And this woman says that God would have come down into a Woman?. . ." The Scribe is scandalized, and his peers approve what he says.

Jesus, as though speaking to Himself, begins to speak without looking at anyone. He says:

"The Woman shall crush the serpent's head [Gen 3:15].

'A Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel' [Is 7:14; Douay].

'And there shall come forth a Rod out of the root of Jesse,
and a Flower shall rise up out of his root.
And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him' [Is 11:1-2; Douay].

"That Woman is My Mother. Scribe, for the sake of your knowledge, remember the words of the Book and understand them."

The Scribes do not know what to say. They must have read those words a thousand times, acknowledging their truth. Could they deny it now? They remain silent" (*Poema* VII, 1700-1702).[26]

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26. The *Poema* contains this other short portrait of Mary: She had "the countenance of an angel, eyes like stars and a smile sweeter than the kiss of a mother, as sweet as Her name, which is Mary, so holy as to be able to bend over the new-born God" (*Poema*, IV, 764).

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This final portrait depicts the Virgin as God's perfect Handmaid. With Her dazzling, eternal purity of body and soul, She serves God in both the Incarnation of the Son of God and the Redemption of humanity. That is why She is worthy of praise and glory. Jesus, with various scriptural prophecies, confirms, against the Scribes themselves, the very high praise of His Most Holy Mother by the young Prophetess.

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III. MARIAN SUNBEAMS

In the last chapter we contemplated a few of Valtorta's portraits which reproduce the superhuman, heavenly, and fascinating features of the Virgin Mary.

In this chapter, we will admire the blazing *sunbeams* emanating from the "Woman clothed with the sun" (Rev 12:1). These sunbeams shed a bright light on the Virgin's transcendent personality, highlighting Her unique mission or Her singular privileges, or both.

The numerous titles or appellations attributed to the Blessed Virgin by Valtorta, emanate from Her like a profusion of dazzling *sunrays.*

They are highly poetic and profoundly theological titles. The names evoke the agreeable vision of an abundant rain of scintillating pearls that adorn the soul and body of God's Masterpiece. The titles constitute a kind of interminable Marian litany, in which we can admire the most beautiful, highly scented, intertwined flowers which modestly bow their petals before the most ravishing Flower of Heaven and earth.

I shall spread out here the results of my enquiry into the ten volumes of *Il Poema dell'Uomo-Dio* and all of Valtorta's writings, both published and unpublished.

1. Marian Sunbeams in *Il Poema Dell'Uomo-Dio*

Let us now review the ten large volumes of this work.

Volume I. The Virgin is "the One Who loved" (p. 4). She is a "Living Paradise" (p. 19). She is the Flower of the world, "the true, unique Flower, that blooms eternally: lily and rose, sweet-smelling violet and jasmine, helianthus and cyclamen blended together and with them all the flowers on earth in one Flower only: Mary, in Whom

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every grace and virtue is gathered together" (p. 20). Mary is "the Creature of [God's] delight," (p. 30), "the Sun of His sun" (*ibid.*), "the Flower of His garden" (*ibid.*). She is "the Woman Who is inferior in perfection only to God" (p. 57), "the Virgin Beloved by God" (p. 61), "the Flower of God's Temple" (p. 73), the "living Ark of God" (p. 91). She is the "Spring from which redemption gushes out" (p. 139), the "Cause of delight in the world" (*ibid.*), the "Seat of the Power of God" (*ibid.*). She is "the Eternal Bearer of Jesus" (p. 153), the "Sun of [Joseph's] soul" (p. 177), "the greatest woman in Creation" (p. 217). She received from God "a heart of the most pure gold to withstand the storm of sorrow" (*ibid.*).

Volume II. The Blessed Virgin is "{the All-Grace}" (p. 15). She was "the first of {those who become victims out of love for} Jesus" (p. 16) and "the first benefactress of mankind" (p. 77). She, "the second in goodness after God" (*ibid.*), is "All Love" (*ibid.*). "Before Her grace the most beautiful roses of En-Gedi turn pale and the lilies of the royal flower beds seem misshapen" (p. 244). She is "the Lily of God" (p. 653), "the snow that became a flower and offered Herself to God" (p. 654).

Volume III. Mary is the "Holy Star of orientation" [for souls] (p.84). She is the "Kind Teacher of saints" (*ibid.*), the "Healthy Cure of sick people" (*ibid.*). She is "the Flower of Nazareth" (p.372), "the Pearl of Galilee" (*ibid.*), "the Peace of God" (*ibid.*). She is "the Flower of Heaven and of creation" (*ibid.*), "the Pearl of Paradise" (*ibid.*).

Volume IV. The Virgin Mary is "the Mother and Teacher of Christians" (p.1186). She is "different from all women. She is the perfume of woman, but the perfume of holy woman" (p.1224).

Volume V. The Blessed Virgin is "the true Mother of Christians" (p.24). John the Apostle calls Her "Star of the Morning, . . . Golden Moon of my Heaven" (p.49).

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"Her {loveable spirit} is a bed of heavenly flowers... Her appearance is a poem..." (p.180). She is "the sweet dove of God" (p.269), "the sublime Mystery of God" (*ibid.*). "God poured [in Her] every perfection to receive delight and comfort from [Her]" (p.270). She was "born of the {Supreme Virgin [God]} to be the 'Virgin,' the Perfection of Creation, the Light of Paradise" (*ibid.*). By Herself She "can love as all Mankind put together cannot love" (*ibid.*). She is the "{caress on the Eternal One's wound} that man inflicted on God" (p.271). In Her "is the {Health} of the world," since She is the "Mother of the Love Incarnate" (*ibid.*). She is "the Elect Daughter of God" (*ibid.*). She is the "Virgin purer than lilies" (p.325), "the Woman with a child's soul, . . . the Woman with an angel's soul" (p.540). She is "purer than [the] first lily . . . . And Her scent of inviolate Virgin fills Heaven and earth" (*ibid.*). She is the "Most Beautiful Lady who changes the Earth into a paradise" (p.541). She is the "living Lily in Whose bosom are the three Pistils of fire of the Holy Trinity" (*ibid.*). Her purity "will be the gem of Paradise" (*ibid.*).

Volume VI. Mary was "created for the delight of God and of the universe" (p.741). "She is the spring of living water gushing out forcefully from the Beautiful Mountain [Lebanon], giving the Water of Life to the Earth, and springing, with Her perfumed beauty, upwards to Heaven" (p.945). She is "living Praise to God," (p.1107) and "the happy Spouse of Eternal Love" (*ibid.*).

Volume VII. The Virgin Mary is "a holy Tabernacle" (p.1407), "the Star that leads the lost to the Most High" (p.1582). "She has ravished God's heart with a single one of Her dove's coos. The beauty of Her spirit has charmed the Most High" (p.1700). She is "God's lovely Star, from the time She rises to the time She sets" (p.1701). She is "the Light that helps men find the Lord" (*ibid.*).

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Volume VIII. "Mary wants nothing but forgiveness, even if She does not need it for Herself" (p.336), because "a mother always forgives..." (*ibid*.). "She not only experienced all the consequences of all states of life; She also experienced them with supernatural wisdom" (p.420). She is "the Tree of Life, the living Ark of God, the Mould of God in which Wisdom made a seat for Himself and Grace enfleshed Himself" (*ibid*.). "Virginity emanates from all that is accomplished through Her" (p.455). "All things done through Mary produce virginity" (*ibid*.).

Volume IX. Mary is "God's Rose" (p.60), "the Mother of Grace and the Throne of Wisdom" (p.133). She is "the holiest testimony of what God can do" (p.219). She is a "lily, filled to the brim with heavenly dew" (p.248). She is Jesus' "Treasurer" (p.303), "the Mother of virgins and saints, [and even] of sinners" (p.304), "the new Eve" (p.305), and the one who "must cancel Eve" (p.308).

Volume X. The Blessed Virgin is a "living Heaven" (p.29). She is "the Queen of the priesthood and the Mother of Christians" (*ibid*.). She is "the Pearl born in the ocean of the Trinity so as to give birth, on earth, to the Second Person" (p.101). She is "inviolate Purity" (*ibid*.), "the Virgin of virgins" (p.235), the "Seat of divine Wisdom" (p.278). She was "destined . . . to become the Ark of the Word" (p.283-284). She is "the greatest Saint" (p.285), "the Woman of the Hail Mary and the 'Let it be done to Me according to your word'" (p.287). Mary is "the Seat of all Wisdom, Mother of the Word and of Light" (p.311). She was "the first Christian" (p.332). Mary has always been like "the lily of the valley, a pleasant rose, a fair olive tree, a fruitful vine, a holy ear of grain" (p.339). "Only God's holiness was greater than Mary's" (p.351). Her "flesh, unlike any other mortal flesh, had been glorified before the final resurrection and the last judgment" (p.353- 354). "Next to Christ, Mary was the

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holiest of all creatures" (p.354). She "has become an ocean of love in Heaven. Her charity overflows on Her faithful children" (p.355). She is the "Universal Mother of all human beings" (*ibid.*). She is "the unquestionable manifestation of what God had conceived and intended for mankind" (p.356). She is "the Creator's masterpiece" (*ibid.*), "the marvel of the universe" (*ibid.*), and the "Wedding Ring between God and humanity" (*ibid.*). "She rolls time back to the first days" (*ibid.*).

2. Marian Sunbeams in Valtorta's Other Writings

Outside of *Il Poema dell'Uomo-Dio,* we can find Marian light beams in the following writings:

a) The *Quaderni* [Notebooks] of 1943.

In this intimate diary,[27] we find the following Marian titles, appellations and comments. Mary is a "living Tabernacle" (p.25 [June 4, 1943]), a "living example for Her children" (p.53 [June 13, 1943]). "Her perfection is such that all of Paradise bows before Her throne, on which descends the Trinity's eternal smile and eternal splendour" (p.68 [June 27, 1943]). She is "the Humble One *par excellence"* (p.103 [May 21, 1943]), "the Saint of saints" (p.184 [June 19, 1943]), and the "joy of all Paradise" (*ibid.*). Her life was "consecrated to supreme grief and supreme joy" (p.190 [July 2, 1943]). She is "inferior to no one but God" (p.298 [Sept. 1, 1943]). She is "the woman who was spared no grief" even though "She, more than anyone else, deserved to be spared from grief" (*ibid.*).

Mary "is the Father's Daughter, the Son's Mother, the Holy Spirit's Spouse . . . . Her fusion with the Trinity is

27. Not yet published in English. [Editor.]

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perfect. She, therefore, possesses Her Lord's power, intelligence and wisdom" (p.301 [Sept. 3, 1943]).[28] She is "the only Child of mankind who always remained perfect" (p.305 [Sept. 5, 1943]). She "never separated from God" (p.306 [Sept. 5, 1943]). Her spirit and God's Spirit remained united "in a loving embrace which was crowned in Heaven" (*ibid.*). She "lived in God so single-mindedly that She 'vanished' in Him" (*ibid.*). "By Her sacrifice, She began the work of Redemption" (p.307 [Sept. 6, 1943]). She is the "Masterpiece of universal creation" (*ibid.*). She "is the testimony of God's merciful super-love for mankind" (p.308 [Sept. 6, 1943]). She is "the Virgin in whom God's thought rejoiced even before time came to exist, the Virgin in whom the Father's creative perfection is summarized" (p.309 [Sept. 6, 1943]). She is the "Flower of creation, more beautiful than all the flowers of the universe" (*ibid.*). She is the "Genitrix of the Universal Church" (p.310 [Sept. 6, 1943]). She is "the Virgin who none but the Lord kisses" (*ibid.*). She is "the Redemptrix of Woman and Woman's children" (*ibid.*). She "cancelled Eve and took her place to bear the fruit of life where the enemy had sowed the seed of death" (*ibid.*). In Mary the Word "found another Paradise no different from the one where the Triad works Its divine wonders." Because of Her, then, the Incarnate Word "did not miss Heaven nor the Father's bosom" (*ibid.*).

Mary is the "true Ark of God's Word" (p.331 [August 1, 1943]). She is "a Mother, powerful at God's side because She is His Daughter, Spouse, and Mother" (p.416 [Nov. 8, 1943]). She "vanquished Satan" (*ibid.*). Mary "bore God inside of Her, not only spiritually, but as live flesh, because She reached the highest degree of

28. The quotations in this paragraph are taken from a series of dictations on the *Hail Mary* (*Quad.* '43, Sept. 3-7, 1943). [Editor.]

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humility" (p.437 [Oct. 13, 1943]). She "brought Christ to the world" (p.440 [Oct. 13, 1943]). She is "the fountain out of which gushes the living Water come down from Heaven, and which gives us the means to climb up to Heaven" (p.455 [Oct. 15, 1943]). She is "the holiest of all creatures ever on earth" (p.591 [Nov. 28, 1943]). She is "All Grace" (p.592 [Nov. 28, 1943]). She, "the Co-Redemptrix, was waiting for the hour of Her [mystical] death at the foot of the cross to give us life" (p.614 [Dec. 2, 1943]). She was "the silent Virgin, the luminous Virgin" (p.617 [Dec. 3, 1943]), "the Redeemer's Mother, that is, the Woman of sufferings" (p.642 [Dec. 8, 1943]). She was the "first believer" (p.667 [Dec. 14, 1943]). She died a "mystical death at the foot of the Cross" (p.692 [Dec. 25, 1943]). Her maternity was "delicate as a rose sprung in a frosty winter scenery, pure as an April dawn, holy as an Angel's call, and humble as befitted Her Son, the Conqueror of everlasting pride" (p.698 [Dec. 26, 1943]).

b) The *Quaderni* of 1944.

The Virgin Mary "bore the hope of mankind" (p.40 [Jan. 10, 1944])[29]

c) The *Quaderni* of 1945-1950.

"In Her rests every hope of salvation for the Church and humanity" (p.481 [Oct.7, 1947]). She is "the Mother of the Word of the Gospel" (*ibid.*) and the "Love of the One and Triune God" (p.484 [Oct. 19, 1947]). She is the "remedy for all the diseases that kill spirits and extinguish Faith, Hope and Charity in the midst of mankind" (*ibid.*).

29. There are many passages about Mary in the *Quaderni* of 1944, but for some reason Fr. Roschini hardly quoted any of them. That same year, by the way, Maria Valtorta also wrote Volume I of *Il poema dell'Uomo-Dio;* a volume which contains much about Our Lady. [Editor.]

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Mary is called the "first-born Daughter, chosen as such by the Father" (p.572).[30] She is "always full of grace" (*ibid.*). She will be the "Forerunner of Christ in His second coming" (p.579). She is the "Teacher of life" (*ibid.*). Her heel "is destined to crush the infernal dragon for ever" (p.580). She is "the Woman whose name is like a star" (p.581), "the Woman who was a tabernacle for God and His eternal praise" (p.593). She is "God's perfect Image and Resemblance" (*ibid.*), "moulded by God's hand so that She could be 'the mould of the Incarnate Word'" (*ibid.*). She is the "most pure Mirror in which God's image appears" (*ibid.*), She is "supreme Beauty and Perfection" (*ibid.*). She is "the Creator's Masterpiece" (p.594). She "reveals to us the blessed destiny of God's children." She "has shown us, in practice, how to live to be the children of God" (*ibid.*).

d) *Libro di Azaria* [*The Book of Azariah*].[31]

That book presents the Blessed Virgin as "the completely holy One" (p.106), the "One who is wholly Grace, the Daughter, Spouse and Mother of Grace, the Queen of the Apostles and the Church on earth, Queen of the Angels in Heaven" (p.108). She is "the crowned Spouse of the Holy Spirit" (p.111), "the greatest Creature after God" (p.118), "the Saint inferior to God alone" (*ibid.*). She was "Spotless from the beginning" (p.130), and "deserved to be the Mother of God" (*ibid.*). She is "more beautiful than Heaven itself" (p.154). She is "the Intact One that neither marriage, nor giving birth, nor death

30. The quotations in this paragraph are taken from a series of writings on the Book of Revelation (*Quad 45-50*, p.565-627). Titled *L'Apocalisse* [The Apocalypse], this section was written in 1950. It was a fitting supplement to the many previous dictations she received in 1943 and 1944 on the End Times [Publisher — Kolbe's].

31. [Azariah is another name for Raphael the Archangel. Editor.] This book was written in 1946-1947.

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were able to brand, violate or reduce to dust like common mortals" (p.169). Mary is the "holy Mother and Wet-nurse of the human race, the choice Storehouse, the Garden filled with flowers and golden bees, the enclosed Garden and sweet Fountain" (p.170-171). She "made the Word into a man to give Him to mankind to save them and be their Food" (*ibid.*). She "made Jesus with the flour of Her body and the honey of Her heart" (p.171). She is "the Completely Pure One" (p.176), the One who "turned Herself into a heavenly Tabernacle, a heavenly Throne where God would keep living in a Heaven, as long as possible, before being grieved due to rubbing elbows with the world" (*ibid.*). She is the "One Who is wholly Grace" (p.200). She is the "Preparation for Jesus" (p.262); She "prepares people's spirits for a true and fruitful union with Jesus" (p.263). She is the "universal Genitrix" (*ibid.*). She "poured Her milk of grace on Her poor children: week, ill, fearful, tired sinners" (*ibid.*). She is the "perfect Ciborium" because "the Bread of Life and Grace always remain in Her" (*ibid.*). She is "the holy Necessity" (*ibid.*), "the root and Tree of the living" (p.264), the "true Tree of life" (*ibid.*), the "mystical Rose" (*ibid.*). "All the thorns of the huge rose garden, that the world is, . . . are fastened on Her pure-white heart, turning it red" (p.274). She is "the sweet and holy instrument of God's works" (p.324). She is "Queen and Teacher of every creature that loves the Lord" (p.336). She is the "Womb of holiness" (p.347), the "Pearl of Heaven" (p.348), the "Woman blessed among all women, living Love, made by Love, the Spouse of Love, the Mother of Love" (*ibid.*).

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e) *Lezioni sull'Epistola di Paolo ai Romani* [*A Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans*].[32]

The Blessed Virgin is presented as "the one who, in the flesh, was a Seraph" (p.45). She is "the most beloved Ark of pure gold" (*ibid.*). She is the "Mother of Life, the Source of salvation" (p.46), the "living Paradise in which the Trinity is well pleased" (p.92). She is the "royal Priestess" (p.93), the "Virgin ardent with the purest and strongest charity of all creatures born of mankind" (*ibid.*). She is "the second Garden of Eden, in which God took His delight in conversing with Innocence in the cool of the evening" (p.94). She is a "beautiful, agreeable, pure garden of delights" (*ibid.*). She is "the holiest and most wounded of mothers" (p.230), the "Mother of Life" (p.231).

f) Other writings.[33]

She is "the greatest woman of creation, the Mother" (Feb. 2, 1944). She is "the first Lily in bloom in the Garden of Eden" (August 14, 1944). She lived "on earth with Her soul always hovering in Heaven" (Nov. 6, 1944).

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32. The Holy Spirit began dictating this work to Maria Valtorta in 1948. He then interrupted His dictations for over one year, bringing the book to completion in 1950 only. [Publisher — Kolbe's.]

33. The following Marian appellations have not been retrieved in Maria Valtorta's works published in Italian. Either they belong to yet unpublished writings, or Fr. Roschini may have given the wrong reference. [Publisher — CEV.] [The Maria Valtorta Research Center now has most of *Il poema dell'Uomo-Dio* on computer, as well as all the *Quaderni* (1943, 1944, and 1945-1950). Even though we haven't had time yet to correct all the typist's typos (in the *Quaderni*) or all the optic scanner's mistakes (in *Il poema*), we nonetheless have been able to retrieve eight passages which the Italian publisher had been unable to find manually. The eight passages have been inserted where they belong. Now only three passages remain to be found. Editor.]

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Now that we have reached the end of this long litany of appellations at once honorific, poetic, and theological, two reflections spontaneously come to mind:

— We cannot find such a luxuriance of Marian appellations in any of the Fathers, Doctors or writers of the Church; probably not even in the sum total of their writings. This shows the genial fruitfulness of Valtorta's writings.
— All these titles, together constitute a sheaf of light beams that all originate, as from a light source, from Mary's transcendent personality. They reveal Her unique mission as Mother of Christ and of Christians, and as Mediatrix between God and humanity. They also reveal the remarkable privileges which God conferred on Her to make Her worthy of such an extraordinary mission.

3. The Key Word to the Whole of Marian Theology

It is the word *Love*.

"Oh! My theology!" [Mary said to Maria Valtorta.] "It has only one key-word: *Love*. I am the Queen of Heaven because I understood that theology *as no other creature ever did* (*Quad. '44,* p.348 [May 13]).

This theology, therefore, has the most beautiful of all words as its key-word: the word *love*. Of all pure creatures,[34] Mary received the most love and gave the most in return. God loved Her the most, and She loved God the most.

Divine Love loved Mary more than He did all other pure creatures put together. Divine Love destined Her to

34. The expression *pure creature* refers to any creature except the humanity of Jesus. See note 35 on page 63 [Editor.]

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a mission unique in all regards, adorned Her with totally remarkable privileges (with a view to Her mission), and made Her the object of an exclusive veneration (in view of Her exceptional mission and extraordinary privileges). In return, Mary outdid all other pure creatures put together in loving God and loving other beings for God's sake. Love for God and for the neighbour led Her to preserve Herself in absolute purity. It led Her to accept the most painful of all missions, that of Mother and Associate of the God-Man our Redeemer. It also led Her to sacrifice Herself completely to the glory of God and the eternal salvation of humanity. Love is the ultimate *key-word* of the whole of Marian theology.

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Who is Mary? A Synthesis of Valtorta's Mariology

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Part I
Mary in Eternity *p.61-73*

Part II
Mary in the Course of Time *p.75-380*

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Part I
Mary in Eternity

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In God's mind and heart, Mary was the first of all pure creatures of the universe. Of all the persons and things God would create, Mary was the first one He thought of. Mary is the One Whom He first loved from all eternity. In this sense we may call Mary, as Maria Valtorta does, "Second-born of the Father", and also the "Firstborn" of all creatures. The Blessed Virgin is the "Second-born of the Father", if She is considered in relation to Christ Her Son; She is the "Firstborn" of all creatures, if we consider Her in relation to all other pure creatures.

I. Mary "Second-Born of the Father" *p. 63*

II. Mary "Tabernacle of the Most Holy Trinity" from All Eternity *p. 73*

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I. MARY "SECOND-BORN OF THE FATHER"

While the Blessed Virgin is second to Christ, She is the first of all other beings, that is, the first of all pure creatures.[35]

1. Mary, Second to Christ in being contemplated by the Eternal One and in pleasing Him;
2. Mary, Second to Christ perfection-wise;
3. Mary, Second to Christ in redeeming the world;
4. Mary, Second to Christ in experiencing the resurrection;
5. Mary, Second to Christ because of God's eternal love for Her.

1. Mary, Second to Christ in Being Contemplated by the Eternal One and in Pleasing Him

The only Son of the eternal Father, the Word, is called "Firstborn". This does not imply that the Father would have had other sons with a divine nature. The Word is called "Firstborn" because "all things were made by Him" and in Him (Jn 1:3; Douay). The Father has re-established all things in Christ His Son (Eph. 1:10), since He saw everything in Him, the eternal Word and future Christ. . . That is why Christ is also the first of all created persons and things: all have been subordinated to His glory.

Immediately after Christ, before any other created person or thing, comes Mary, His Mother. It is therefore legitimate to call Her the "second-born of the Father", as Maria Valtorta did.

35. Christ, superior to His Mother Mary, is not a *pure creature*, since He is at once Creator and creature. As God, He is the Creator; as man, He is a creature.

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"The mark of God," [Jesus said], "was impressed so completely and exactly on Mary, that only in the First-born was it greater" (*Poema*, I, 3)[36]

"In God's mind," [Maria Valtorta wrote], "the Virgin Mary was present with all Her future actions, together with Christ who, thanks to Her, would take flesh in order to redeem the world. When the invisible world was created, the future Christ was proposed to the Angels as a trial to confirm them in grace. In a similar way, when the visible world was created, the future Mary was designated as the hope of mankind and the Enemy's punishment.

'I will put enmities between you and the Woman,
and your seed and Her seed:
She shall crush your head,
and you shall lie in wait for Her heel' [Gen 3:15; Douay].

"[Mary] is *second* to Christ in being *contemplated* by Eternal Thought and pleasing It. Eternal Thought rejoices as It admires the perfection of Its beloved Children: first Christ, being Son by nature; secondly Mary, being an adopted Daughter. The innumerable host of the children of mankind boasts only two persons in whom the Father has always been able to find delight. Only two souls give delight to God's gaze because of Their perpetual Virginity, untouched as They were by the least hereditary or voluntary fault. These were Jesus and Mary."[37]

2. Mary, Second to Christ Perfection-wise

As for natural and supernatural *perfection*, Mary is second to Christ, who was at once Son of God and Son of Mary. Since Christ was God, His own perfection was infinite in all regards.[38]

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36. The expression "God's mark" brings to mind what Alexander Manzoni wrote of Napoleon Bonaparte, in his ode "The Fifth of May": "Let us bow our forehead before the supreme Creator who wanted to engrave in him the most profound imprint of His creative spirit." In Christ, God's stamp or imprint is absolute. After Christ, however, it is in Mary that God's creative spirit is most deeply impressed. After Mary, this imprint is found in countless lesser degrees.

37. Note found in D2 (Oct. 24, 1947).

38. Note found in D2 (Oct. 24, 1947).

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There are two great classes of perfections: natural perfections (regarding perfection in body and soul), and supernatural perfections (sanctifying grace, infused virtues, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and charismata).[39] All these gifts find their supreme perfection in Christ. Next to Christ, the nearest creature to Him, the one most similar to Him, is, precisely, His Mother Mary.

Jesus Himself declares:

"Mary achieved every perfection attainable by creatures" (*Quad. '45- 50*, p.332 [Dec. 14, 1946]).

3. Mary, Second to Christ in Redeeming the World

As for *Redemption*, Mary comes next to the Redeemer, since She is the Co-Redemptrix. Being second to Him, She is the role model for all those who would like to suffer in order to "fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ" (Col 1:24; Douay).[40]

It is not enough to say that the Blessed Virgin was intimately associated with the Redeemer's *person* as His Mother. We must see that She has been closely involved with His *work* of Redemption as a Co- Worker. She collaborated with Him when He accomplished the work of Redemption and, ever since, She has collaborated with Him in applying the benefits of Redemption to each human being individually. That is why, when it comes to redeeming humanity, Mary is inferior to none but the Redeemer. Her role is the second greatest, next to the Redeemer's role. Thus She is the model for all those who want to be, in their own way, "co-redeemers" for their brothers and sisters, the members of Christ's mystical Body, the Church.

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39. Concerning charismata, see p.3. [Editor.]
40. Note found in D2 (Oct. 24, 1947).

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4. Mary, Second to Christ in Experiencing the Resurrection

As for the *Resurrection*, Mary comes second because it was not fitting that the Co-Redemptrix should undergo death like all human beings. This is because She had been privileged to be the Immaculate Conception and the Mother of God. Her soul was not separated from Her body as a result of disease, but of a supreme ecstasy. Therefore, *if* we can say that She died, she nonetheless was not buried and did not undergo corruption. Rather, Angels quickly took Her body up to Heaven. It was then reunited to Her spirit, which was ravished in the Empyrean[41] of the Trinity's eternal love. . .[42]

The word "resurrection", as we will see when we examine the Assumption, is taken here in a broad sense. According to Valtorta, when Mary "died," Her soul was not separated from Her body. Her *spirit* was, but not Her soul. This is because Her "death" was, in fact, a supreme ecstasy. As a result, when Mary was assumed, Her *spirit* (not Her soul) was joined back with Her body. Therefore, it is only in the broad meaning of the word that we speak here of *resurrection.*

Such a "resurrection," by right, had to be awarded to the Blessed Virgin since She was associated with the Redeemer, as Co-Redemptrix, in His whole saving operation for us.

Redemption is a struggle to destroy Satan's domination in the world through sin and death. *In that struggle*, Jesus and Mary were permanently united. In Their *triumph* over Satan, sin and death, They had to be united also.

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41. The Empyrean is "the highest heaven. In ancient cosmology the sphere of the pure element of fire: in Christian use, the abode of God and the angels" (Oxford Dictionary). [Editor.]

42. Note found in D2 (Oct. 24, 1947).

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5. Mary, Second to Christ Because of God's Eternal Love for Her

Finally, from the beginning of eternity until the end, God loves Himself infinitely. Next to loving Himself in His three Persons, God has loved Mary *with an eternal love*, since She would be His Daughter, Spouse, and Most Holy Mother.[43]

The one and triune God has had a unique *love* for the Blessed Virgin from all eternity. This is the key to, and supreme reason for, the Blessed Virgin's extraordinary grandeur and exceptional perfection.

The Most Holy Trinity, before anything else, loves Itself infinitely: that is Its greatest love. Next to loving Itself, the Trinity has loved Mary before anything else; and that is Its second greatest love. The reason why the Trinity's second greatest love is directed at Mary is that each of the three Persons of the Most August Triad saw in Her the dearest creature of all. The Father saw in Her His future Daughter of Predilection. The Son saw in Her His future, dearest Mother. The Holy Spirit saw in Her His future immaculate Spouse. The three august Persons of the Most Holy Trinity, therefore, awarded Mary gifts worthy of Their unique and most remarkable love for Her.

Furthermore, it is legitimate to apply to the Virgin Mary all that is said about Wisdom in chapter 8 of the Book of Proverbs (vs. 22-31).

Jesus said [to the Seer]: ". . . Come and read [the Virgin Mary's] glories in the Book of the Ancestor [Solomon]:

"'God possessed Me at the beginning of His works,
from the beginning, before the Creation.
From everlasting I was firmly set,
in the beginning, before earth came into being.
The deep did not yet exist and I was already conceived.
The springs did not yet gush with water

43. Note found in D2.

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and the mountains had not yet risen in their huge masses,
neither were the hills jewels in the sun,
when I came to birth.
God had not yet made the earth, the rivers and the foundation of the world,
and I was there.
When He prepared the Heavens I was present,
when with immutable laws He enclosed the deep under the surface,
when He fixed the Heavens firm and He suspended there the springs of water,
when He assigned the sea its boundaries and gave laws to the waters,
when He ordered the waters not to invade the shore,
when He laid down the foundations of the earth,
I was with Him arranging everything.
I always played joyfully in His presence,
I played in the universe. . .'

"You [plural] applied these words to Wisdom, but they speak of Her: the beautiful Mother, the holy Mother, the Virgin Mother of Wisdom that I am, Who am now speaking to you [singular].

"I wanted you to write the first line of the song at the top of the book that speaks of Her, that She might be [proclaimed][44] {and known as} the consolation and joy of {God; the} reason for the constant, perfect, intimate delight of this God One and Trine, Who rules and loves you and Who received from man so many reasons for being sad; the reason why He perpetuated the human race, even when, at the first test, humanity deserved to be destroyed; the reason for the forgiveness you have received" (*Poema*, I, 29-30).

In Proverbs it is stated that Wisdom *pre-existed* all creatures. According to exegesis, who is this Wisdom: Christ or Mary? It is primarily Christ, and Mary by extension. It signifies Christ, incarnate Wisdom, and, with Him, Mary His Mother.

Augustine Cardinal Bea . . . wrote the following about Wisdom, as found in Proverbs, chapter 8, verses 22-31.

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44. Instead of "proclaimed," D2 has "contemplated." [The English translation of *Il poema dell'Uomo-Dio* went according to D2. Editor.]

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"Here we perceive Mary's image and, at the same time Christ's, as if She formed one single thing along with Her divine Son" (*Mariologia*, under the direction of Father Straeter S.J., vol. I, 1952, p. 39). Cardinal Bea remarks that, "since Her origins, the Church has paid particular attention to the community of duties and destinies of both Son and Mother. By referring to that community, the Church warranted its habit of taking scriptural expressions referring primarily to the Son and extending them to His holy Mother Mary, particularly in the liturgy of the Mass and in the divine Office" (*ibid.*, p.28). Christ, incarnate Wisdom, is not even conceivable without the One through Whom He took flesh. Attributing to Mary what is said of Christ-Wisdom is founded on the close relationship between Son and Mother in virtue of Her divine motherhood.

Cardinal Bea continues with two quotations. "The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His ways" (Proverbs 8:22a; [Douay]). "I came out of the mouth of the Most High, the Firstborn before all creatures" (Sirach 24:5 [Vulgate: Ecclesiasticus 24:5]). He then remarks that "the frequency and constancy with which the Church repeats these passages in its liturgy and applies them to Mary, deny that these applications would be a purely arbitrary interpretation or mere accommodation. Even in its prayers, and above all in the liturgy, the Church submits to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. An old saying states, very rightly so, *lex orandi, lex credendi*: *as you pray, so you believe.* The reason for such an application, therefore, must go much deeper. It is found in the reciprocal relationship between Mary and Her divine Son, according to God's specific will. Indeed, the Son-become-man was assigned His place in the universe and among humanity by God's plan. Now, this plan included the One [Mary] who was to be at His side during His mission as it was being accomplished. She was to give Him to the world

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and collaborate with Him, in an eminent way, for our Redemption.

"'Before I formed you in the bowels of your mother, I knew you . . . and made you a Prophet unto the nations' (Jer. 1:5; [Douay]). If the Lord said that to the Prophet Jeremiah, how much more to Mary, Who is greater than all the Prophets and played a much more intimate role in our Redemption! From all eternity the one triune God 'gazed' at Her (if we may speak of the Lord in such human terms). God 'gazed' at Her person, mission, and position in the world, as He did for no one else. He then linked Her to His divine Son's person, mission and position. . . That is why, in the last analysis, the Church does not worry when Scriptural words that refer to Eternal wisdom are applied to Mary, the 'Throne of Wisdom'. . . In this way, the Church completes and amplifies, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, the Form of the Mother of God as the Old Testament depicted Her to us. This also allows us to gaze way back on Her mysterious pre-existence in God's mind. . . The Holy Spirit, Who speaks to us through the biblical writers, has seen to it that the prehistory of God's Wisdom-made-flesh would be, at the same time, that of the human Mother and very close collaborator of the Divine Son. The Holy Spirit, moreover, has enlightened the Church, so it might always understand more clearly Their mysterious interdependence and penetrate it more profoundly" (*ibid.*, p.30-31).

Jesus, in a dictation to Maria Valtorta, expounded the reasons why God possessed Mary "in the beginning of His ways . . . from the beginning . . . before the earth was made" [Proverbs 8:22-23; Douay]. There are four reasons:[45]

First Reason: "that She might be [proclaimed] {and known as} the consolation and joy of God." Next to

45. These were quoted on p.68. [Editor.]

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Christ, therefore, Mary was God's first and greatest consolation, His first and greatest pleasure.

Second Reason: "that She might be . . . {known as . . . the} reason for the constant, perfect, intimate delight of this God One and Trine, Who rules and loves you and Who received from man so many reasons for being sad." Next to Christ, Mary was God's greatest delight, a constant, perfect, intimate joy: constant, that is, without any interruption; perfect, that is, without the least shortcoming; intimate, that is, not superficial. Mary was such a cause for joy for God that She was able to compensate for the "so many reasons for being sad" which He received from humanity.

Third Reason: Mary was "the reason why [God] perpetuated the human race, even when, at the first test [in the garden of Eden], humanity deserved to be destroyed." Therefore, we owe the Blessed Virgin the fact that God, after our fall from grace, did not destroy us as we deserved. Mary's love for God abundantly compensated for the indifference of all other human beings.

Jesus says: ". . . To have Mary that loved Him [God]! Oh! It was well worthwhile creating Man and allowing him to exist and decreeing to forgive him, {in order} to have the Beautiful Virgin, the Holy Virgin, the Immaculate Virgin, the Loving Virgin, the Beloved Daughter, the Most Pure Mother, the Loving Spouse! God has given you so much and would have given you even more to possess the creature of His delight, the Sun of His sun, the Flower of His garden. And He continues to give you so much on account of Her, at Her request, for Her joy, because Her joy flows into the joy of God and increases it with flashes that fill the light, the great light of Paradise with brilliant sparkles and every sparkle is a grace to the universe, to mankind, to the blessed souls who reply with a jubilant cry of alleluia to each generation of divine miracle, created by the desire of the Blessed Trinity to see the sparkling smile of joy of the Virgin" (*Poema,* I, 30).

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Fourth Reason: Mary was "the reason for the forgiveness you have received." Besides being the reason why God spared humanity the destruction it deserved as a result of its Fault [original sin], the Blessed Virgin was also the reason for God's forgiveness granted to a guilty humanity.

Jesus says: ". . . {Before man existed, the Supreme Mind, that knows everything, knew that man, on his own, would be a thief and a murderer.} And as the Eternal Goodness has no limits in being good, before Guilt existed, He thought of the means to obliterate Guilt. The means: *I,* the Word. The instrument to render the means an efficient instrument: *Mary.* And the Virgin was created in the sublime mind of God. Everything was created for Me, beloved Son of the Father. . . .

"But I was to be Flesh as well as Spirit. Flesh to save the flesh. Flesh to sublime the flesh, taking it to Heaven many centuries before its time. Because the flesh inhabited by the spirit is God's masterpiece and Heaven had already been made for it. In order to become flesh I needed a Mother. To be God it was necessary that the Father was God.

"Then God created His Spouse[46] . . . .

". . . And again, seeing the Fault and admiring the Faultless One, [God says]: 'Come to Me, You Who wipe out the bitterness of human disobedience, of human fornication with Satan and of human ingratitude. I will take with You My revenge over Satan.'

". . . Hiss, O Satan, your hatred while She comes into the world! This Child has beaten you! Before you were the Rebel, the Twister, the Corruptor, you were already beaten and She was your Conqueror" (*Poema,* I, 32-35).

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46. "God *created* His Spouse," that is, "in His thought," as Jesus previously explained in the same dictation: "And the Virgin *was created in the sublime mind of God*" (*Poema,* I, 33). That is why God told the Virgin Mary: "I see You as You will *be,* Immaculate Woman" (*ibid.,* 33); and a little further: "Her soul appears beautiful and intact as when the Father *conceived* Her" — not 'when He created Her' — "gathering all graces in Her" (*Poema,* I, 37).

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II. MARY "TABERNACLE OF THE MOST HIGH TRINITY" FROM ALL ETERNITY

From all eternity, Mary has been found in both the heart and supreme Intelligence of the Most Holy Trinity. She has thus been granted a share in the Trinity's power, wisdom and love.

[Valtorta wrote:] "On October 24, I saw the symbol of *what Mary is in God*: an incandescent triangle — the Most Holy Trinity — in which was Mary. The voice of the Eternal Father said to me: 'This is how Mary is in Us. Let learned theologians understand what this vision means. Let them understand all that it contains about Mary's power and wisdom. To Her, Love gave Himself completely, Wisdom revealed Itself completely, and Power deigned to bestow Itself completely'" (*Quad. '45-50*, p.486 [Oct. 24, 1947]).

A few days after writing these words, on November 9, 1947, at 10 A.M., Maria Valtorta's guardian Angel appeared to her and said to her:

"The Lord Most High has deigned to explain to you what the words of the Virgin Mary of the Three Fountains meant. ['I, who am in the Most Holy Trinity, am the Queen of Revelation']. The Virgin Mary was embraced by the Holy Trinity, I could say *contained* by the Trinity, even before time ever existed. She was the Trinity's Tabernacle. She contained the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in Her womb, because She contained the blessed fruit of Her virginal womb, Jesus, in whom was found the unity of the Word with the Father and the Holy Spirit. She was thus the Beloved of the One and Triune God. Revelation is Her treasure, and She is the kind and beloved Queen of Revelation. She distributes Wisdom and gives the Word. She is the virginal Fountain made life-giving by God. She gushes forth with streams of living water, that is, eternal life, for whoever drinks of it." (*Quad. '45-50*, p.494-495).

What we have here amounts to a divine Prelude to the story of the greatest human Masterpiece.

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Part II
Mary in the Course of Time

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So far we have examined Mary in eternity, in the mind and heart of the one and trine God. We looked at Her as "Firstborn" or "Second-born" of the Father. Now let us look at Her in the course of time. By Herself She fills all of time.

A) Mary in the Beginning of Time *p. 77*

B) Mary During the Time that Preceded Her *p. 87*

C) Mary in the Fullness of Time *p. 103*

D) Mary in the Time that Follows Her *p. 365*

E) Mary in the End Times *p. 377*

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A) Mary in the Beginning of Time

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Time began when the universe was created, and vice-versa: the universe began when time was created. "In the beginning God created heaven, and earth" (Gen 1:1; [Douay]).

Mary was present to God the Creator, not only when all things were created, but also when the Angels and humanity were tested.

I. Mary Present When All Things were Created p. 79

II. Mary Present When Angels and Humans were Tested p. 82

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I. MARY PRESENT WHEN ALL THINGS WERE CREATED

When God created everything in the universe, He thought of Mary. He kept Her in mind in three ways:

1. as the *model* of all things (exemplary cause);
2. as their *goal* (final cause of creation);
3. as the *first* of all creatures, as the Masterpiece of all creation (in this way, God made Her the highest created testimony of His uncreated power, wisdom and goodness.)

1. When God Created All Things, He Saw Mary As Their Model

"I am looking at You and I give {the blue of Your eyes to the sea and the firmament}, {the colour of Your hair to the holy wheat}, whiteness to the lily and a rosy colour to the rose, like Your silky skin. I copy the pearls from Your minute teeth, I make the sweet strawberries {while looking at} Your mouth and I give the nightingale Your notes and the turtle-doves Your weeping. And reading Your future thoughts, and listening to the throbs of Your heart, I have {*My theme, My guide for creation*}. . . . Come and see sheep and lambs, eagles and doves being created. Stay beside Me when I make the hollows of the seas and the grooves of the rivers, and as I raise the mountains and adorn them with snow and forests. Stay here while I sow {grain-bearing plants,} trees and vines . . . . Run, fly, rejoice, My Beauty. And may the universe which is created hour by hour[47] learn

47. Pius IX, in his encyclical *Ineffabilis Deus,* declares that God loved the Blessed Virgin above all creatures. Now God's love, as opposed to that of humans for one another, is *causative*. That is, in St. Thomas Aquinas' words, God's love "does not suppose, but causes goodness" in the persons or things He loves. It follows that "far above all the Angels and all the saints, [God] wondrously . . . endow[ed] Her with the abundance of all heavenly gifts poured from the treasury of His divinity" [English translation: Doheny, W.J., and Kelly, J.: *Papal Documents on Mary.* Milwaukee, Bruce, c1954, p. 10]. Moreover, Pius XI, in his encyclical *Lux Veritatis* borrowed Cornelius a Lapide's affirmation when he wrote: "She is the Mother of God; therefore, whatever privilege (in the order of sanctifying grace) has been granted to any one of

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from You to love Me, My love. May it become more beautiful owing to Your smile, Mother of My Son, Queen of My Paradise, Love of Your God" (*Poema*, I, 33-34).

By means of these poetic expressions, Jesus wanted us to understand that God took the Virgin Mary as a model for the creation of everything else.

2. When God Created All Things, He Saw Mary As Their Goal

God created everything in the universe first for Christ and for His glory, and secondly for Mary and Her glory. Azariah, the Angel, said to our Seer:

"All things were made for the Word [Jn 1:1-3; Col 1:15-20]. It is also true that the greatest works were all performed by Eternal love in Mary and for Mary" (*Azariah*, p.349).

God created all things (the minerals and the innumerable plant and animal species) for *humanity*, the king and synthesis of the universe (see *Poema*, I, 30-32). Humanity itself was created for Christ, the Incarnate Word, and for His glory. Now, since the Incarnate Word is inconceivable without Mary in Whom He took flesh, it follows that all created things, with humanity at their head, were also created for Mary. That is why God said:

"Come, My Joy, have the worlds as a plaything as long as You will be the dancing light of My thought; have the worlds for Your smile, have wreaths and necklaces of stars; place the moon under Your gentle feet; make {the Milky Way} Your stellar scarf. The stars and planets are for You. Come and enjoy looking at the flowers that will be a childish joy for Your Baby and a pillow for the Son of Your womb. . . . Stay beside Me when I make the hollows of the seas and the grooves of the rivers, and as I raise the mountains and adorn them with snow and forests. Stay here while I sow {grain-

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the Saints, She obtained it more than all." [English translation: Carlen, Claudia, I.H.M., ed., *The Papal Encyclicals, 1740-1981*. Wilmington, N.C., McGrath, 1982. Vol. 3, p. 472, #42].

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bearing plants,} trees and vines, and make the olive-tree for You, My Peaceful One, and the vine for You, My Vine branch who will bear the Eucharistic Bunch of grapes" (*Poema*, I, 33- 34).

3. When God Created All Things, He Saw Mary As Being Superior to Them in Every Respect.

That is why Mary is the highest created expression of God's uncreated power, wisdom and goodness: the "Masterpiece of universal creation" (*Quad. '43*, p.307 [Sept. 6]). She is so great and perfect that She constitutes, by Herself, a sufficient reason for creating the universe. Jesus said to Valtorta:

"If the Father had made the whole earth from nothing only to receive Mary, *the work of creation would have had its reason for existence.* Indeed, Mary is such a perfect creature that She bears witness to the wisdom and power and especially the love with which God created the world. . . . The perfection of creation is found [in the Blessed Virgin]. She, the Flower of creation, is more beautiful than all the flowers of the universe. She is the living Star, beside whom all the stars created by My Father seem to shed no light" (*Quad. '43*, p.307 & 309 [Sept. 6]).[48]

48. Dante the divine poet also wrote about Her: "In Thee is joined all goodness that is in any creature" (*Il Paradiso*, Canto **III, 16-17;** [English translation: Sinclair, John D., *Dante's Paradise. Italian Text with English Translation and Comment by . . .* New York, Oxford University Press, 1946]).

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II. MARY PRESENT WHEN ANGELS AND HUMANS WERE TESTED

Besides being present when all things were created, the Virgin Mary was present also when Angels (pure spirits) and humans (made up of matter and spirit) were tested.

After creating a countless multitude of Angels, God created the first two human beings: Adam and Eve. Mary was to be the

"Queen and Lady of mankind, and of Angels as well" (*Azariah*, p.336).

Once He had created Angels and humans to be the subjects of the Queen of the universe, God adorned them with grace. He bestowed on them the high honour of being His children who participate in His divine nature (*ibid.*, p.337). God then placed them in delightful paradises: the Angels in the Angels' Paradise, also called "Heaven" (*ibid.*); and the first two humans in the Garden of Eden.[49] Angels and humans were created to live in love and friendship with God. If they overcame their tests and gave God "the love He demands and deserves" (*ibid.*, p.338), they would be admitted to the reward of heavenly glory, overflowing with perfect happiness. The Angels' test consisted of the proposition which God made to them to adore the divine Word (the Second Person of the Trinity). This implied accepting the revelation that the Eternal Thought would eventually take flesh and become a

49. The Italian original has a clear parallel between "il Paradiso terrestre" (literally: "the earthly Paradise"), and "il Paradiso celeste" (literally: "the heavenly Paradise"). Now the standard English translation of "il Paradiso terrestre" is "the Garden of Eden," and I rendered "il Paradiso celeste" as "the Angels' Paradise." (Please note that the latter was only a temporary arrangement for the Angels, and not at all the same as Heaven in the strict meaning of the word.) [Translator.]

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human being (*ibid.*, p.338-340).[50] The test for the first two human beings was to accept the divine word and to abide by it, abstaining from eating the fruit of the forbidden tree.

A certain number of Angels *and* the first two human beings (our first parents) failed their tests. They did not submit to God's word, thus falling from His grace.

A host of Angels with Lucifer at their head, driven by pride, did not welcome God's Word, refusing to worship Him. The Angels' Paradise was thus turned upside down, and God drove them into hell.

"When Lucifer's sin upset the order of [the Angels'] Paradise and dragged the less faithful spirits into disorder, we were all greatly horrified." [Azariah the Angel speaking to the Seer.] "We felt as though something had been torn apart and destroyed without hope of being fixed. That was truly the case. Perfect charity, which until then was the *only* thing that existed up in [the Angels'] Paradise, was now

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50. The opinion that God revealed to the Angels the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word and obliged them to worship Him, may invoke in its favour *various biblical hints*: Lk 2:8-15; Jn 8:44; I Jn 3:8; Heb. 1:6; Gal. 4:4; I Tim. 3:16, and particularly Revelation 12:2-4. In front of the Woman who was about to give birth, "there was seen another sign in heaven. And, behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns and on his heads seven diadems; and his tail drew the third part of the stars of Heaven [the angels] and cast them to the earth" (Rev. 12:2-4; [Douay]).

This dragon with its rebels suggests that the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word was revealed to the Angels immediately after they were created. At this, they divided themselves into two groups. One third of them, with Lucifer at their head (the dragon), refused to worship the Incarnate Word and were cast to hell. The others, with Michael the Archangel at their head, worshipped the Word and were admitted to the beatific vision. Such is the opinion of several theologians and exegetes basing themselves on chapter 12 of Revelation (see F.M. Risi, *Sul motivo primario dell'Incarnazione del Verbo*, [*The Main Reason for the Incarnation of the Word*] vol.IV, Rome, 1898, p.128-148).

This opinion on the revelation of the Word's Incarnation to the Angels was staunchly defended by the eminent Doctor Francisco Suarez (in his treatise *De Angelis* [The Angels], Opera, vol.II, Venice, Coleti, 1740, book VII, ch. XIII, #13-21, p.508-510: "Utrum peccatum Luciferi fuerit circa excellentiam unionis hypostaticae, illam suae naturae inordinate appetando" ["Lucifer's sin would have been about the excellency of the hypostatic union, being an unruly attack as to its nature."] The rebel angels asked themselves: why would the Divine Person of the Word assume human nature instead of the nature of an Angel which is incomparably nobler?. . . At that they rebelled, refusing to worship the future incarnate Word.

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destroyed.[51] It had toppled over into an abyss reeking with the stench of Hell.

"The absolute charity of Angels had been destroyed, and hatred was born. We were astounded, as one can be in Heaven [that is, in the Angels' Paradise]. We [Azariah the Angel and his companions] remained faithful to the Lord, and we cried on account of God's grief and wrath.[52] We wept because of the fragility of spirits, and because peace and order had been violated in [the Angels'] Paradise. We no longer felt certain that we were impeccable, even though we were pure spirits by nature. Lucifer and his peers had proven to us [by their example] that even Angels could sin and turn into demons. We realized that pride could develop in us: it was latent. We feared that no one, except God, could resist pride, since Lucifer had yielded to it. We quivered because of those obscure forces. Until then, we had not thought that they could invade us. We did not even know that they existed, and now their harsh reality was revealed to us. We felt disheartened. We asked one another, with sparklings of lights: 'Is it useless to be pure as we are? Who will ever be able to give God the love He demands and deserves, if even *we* are liable to sin?'

"At this point, we turned our attention from the abyss of desolation to the Divinity, so as to behold His splendour. We were filled with awe such as we had never experienced before. We then contemplated the second revelation of Eternal Thought. [It was Mary, Who would worship God's Incarnate Word and become His handmaid]. When the proud angels became aware of the first revelation [the Incarnation of the Divine Word], they refused to worship Him, thus causing disorder to appear. At this we were troubled, but when we became aware of the second revelation [Mary, the worshipper and handmaid of the Divine Incarnate Word], we were once again filled with peace.

"*We saw Mary in God's eternal Thought.* Seeing Her and possessing that wisdom which is comfort, security and peace, was one and the same thing. We greeted our future Queen with the song of our light. We contemplated Her freely *received* perfections [Her unique privileges], as well as Her *voluntary* perfections [Her exceptional

51. Because the rebellious Angels now lacked charity.

52. Such expressions, which attribute human traits to God, are commonly found in the Scriptures. See, for example, Gen 6:5-8.

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merits, etc.] What a beautiful instant that was! To comfort His Angels, the Eternal One showed them the precious stone of His Love and Power. We saw that She would be filled with such humility that, by itself, it could make up for all the pride of creatures [whether Angels or humans].

What a dazzling revelation!

"She taught us right then and there not to turn the gifts we had received into instruments that would ruin us. It was not Her bodily form that spoke to us, but Her spiritual reality, speaking wordlessly. Contemplating Her in God's Thought for a moment, preserved us from every proud thought, because She was most Humble. [Thus Mary was a means of salvation even for the Angels, since, by Her, they were preserved of every sin of pride and were strengthened in their charity.] For centuries upon centuries, we lived in the sweetness of that dazzling revelation. For centuries upon centuries, for eternity, we have been rejoicing and will rejoice, possessing as we do the One we had contemplated in spirit. God's Joy is our joy, and we remain in Her light so as to be imbued with it and thus give joy and glory to our Creator" (*Azariah*, p.337-341).

Just as the rebel angels, the first two human beings, our first parents, failed their test. Driven by the pride Satan aroused in them (wanting to be similar to God), they refused to bow to God's commandment and disobeyed Him. As a result, they fell from His grace and lost their free preternatural gifts (integrity and immortality). Furthermore, they were driven out of the Garden of Eden.

We have seen that God revealed Mary to the good Angels in the Angels' paradise, after their comrades fell away. He revealed Mary to them as their salvation (which they obtained by worshipping and serving the incarnate Word of God). Similarly, God revealed Mary to our first parents immediately after their falling away in the Garden of Eden. He revealed Her as the principle of their salvation with Christ and through Christ.

The antithetical parallel Adam/Eve, which is highly developed in Valtorta's writings, also calls for the follow-

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ing conclusions. When God created the Angels He had their future Queen in mind. Similarly, when He formed Adam, He thought of Christ, who was to be the new Adam. Also, when He shaped Eve from Adam's rib, He thought of Mary, since She was to be the new Eve (in virtue of Her grace received from Christ).

All that occurred in the *beginning of times* and of all things. From this solemn moment of history on, Mary appears to us as a queen: Queen of all Creation.

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B) Mary During the Time that Preceded Her

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During this second era (which lasted from the beginning of times to the fullness of time when the Virgin entered the world scene), Mary was *announced by God and the Prophets, and expected by the nations.*

I. The Woman of the Proto-Evangelium (Gen. 3:15) *p. 89*

II. Isaiah's Prophecy about Emmanuel's Virgin Mother (Is. 7:14) *p. 93*

III. Isaiah's Prophecy about the "Shoot of Jesse" (Is. 11:1) *p. 95*

IV. Jeremiah's Prophecy of "the Woman Who will Surround the Man" (Jer. 31:21-22) *p. 96*

V. The "Bride" in the Canticle of Canticles *p. 97*

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I. THE WOMAN OF THE *PROTO-EVANGELIUM* (GEN. 3:15)

Mary was announced by God in what is called the *proto-evangelium*, immediately after our first parents' fall prompted by the hellish serpent. "I will put enmities between you [the serpent] and the Woman, and your seed and Her seed: She shall crush your head, and you shall lie in wait for Her heel" (Gen 3:15; [Douay]).

Maria Valtorta wrote about this famous prophecy ("the queen of all Christologico-Marian prophecies") in several passages (*Poema*, I: 35, 115, 191; II: 207-208; III: 469; VI: 855; VII: 1582, 1702; IX: 307; X: 360-361; *Azariah*, p.264; *Lezioni sull'Epistola di Paolo ai Romani* [A Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans], p.215).

"The Book [the Sacred Scriptures] speaks of Her from its beginning and future books will speak of Her[53] . . ." (*Poema*, III, 469).

"The new Eve was conceived {by God's} Thought at the foot of the paradisiacal apple-tree [Gen 3:8-15] in order to put to flight the serpent and detoxicate the poisoned fruit by means of Her smile and Her tears. She became the tree of the redeeming fruit. . . ." (*ibid.*).

In a discourse in Bethlehem in the first year of His Public Ministry, Jesus evoked the *proto-evangelium* prophecy.

Jesus' powerful voice fills the square:

". . . In Genesis [3:15] it is said: 'I will make you enemies of each other: you and the Woman: She will crush your head and you will strike at Her heel.' It is also said: 'I will multiply your pains in childbearing. . . and the soil shall yield you brambles and thistles' [Genesis 3:16-18]. That was the sentence against man, woman and the serpent.

"I have come from far to revere Rachel's tomb, and in the evening breeze, in the dew of the night, in the plaintive morning song of the

53. "Future books": this deliberately vague expression may be taken as follows. Christ likely referred to: 1. Books in the New Testament that were yet to be written; and 2. any Mariological books whatsoever that would be faithful to the Tradition. [Editor.]

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nightingale, I heard ancient Rachel's sobs being repeated, and they were repeated by the mouths of many mothers of Bethlehem, within their tombs or within their hearts. And I heard Jacob's sorrow roar in the pain of the widowed husbands, deprived of their wives whom sorrow had killed [Gen. 35:19-20; Jer. 31:15; Mt 2:16-18] . . . . I cry with you. . . But listen, brethren of My land. Bethlehem, the blessed land, the least of the towns in Judah, but the greatest in the eyes of God and of mankind, roused Satan's hatred because it was the cradle of the Saviour, as Micah says [Micah 5:2], destined to be the tabernacle on which the Glory of God, the Fire of God, His Incarnate Love was to rest.

"'I will make you enemies of each other: you and the Woman; She will crush your head and you will strike at Her heel.' Which enmity is there greater than the one that aims at a mother's children, the very heart of a woman? And which heel is there stronger than the Saviour's Mother's? The revenge of Satan defeated was therefore a natural one: he did not strike at the heel, but at the hearts of mothers, because of the Mother.

"Oh! Pains were multiplied when the children were lost after giving birth to them! Oh! great was the trouble of being a childless father after sowing and toiling for the offspring! And yet, Bethlehem, rejoice! Your pure blood, the blood of the innocents has prepared a blazing purple way for the Messiah. . ."

The crowd, which has become more and more turbulent after Jesus mentioned the Saviour and His Mother, is now showing clear signs of agitation.

"Be quiet, Master" says Judas. "And let us go."

But Jesus does not listen to him. He goes on: ". . . for the Messiah that the Grace of {God the Father} saved from tyrants to preserve Him for His people and its salvation and. . ." (*Poema*, II, 207-208).

An even more elaborate Mariological interpretation of the *proto- evangelium* is found in a conversation Jesus had in the third year of His Public Ministry. After exorcizing an impure demon, Jesus declared:

". . . Satan first entered man through the flesh [sensuality], and if he can, he will do it again gladly. . . . Women were meant to be God's sweetness on earth. They were meant to be loving incarnations of the Fiery life of the One Who Is. They were meant to be mani-

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festations and testimonies of God's love. . . . Satan was aware of the perfection [of woman]. . . . Satan, who is sly, crafty and cruel, wormed his way into that perfection, bit into it and injected his venom. So did Satan turn woman's love-perfection into an instrument he can wield to dominate both women and men, and spread evil..."

[Alarmed, John asks:] "What about our mothers?"

[Jesus answers:] "Are you worried about them, John? Not all women are Satan's instruments. Women are perfect when it comes to feelings, and are always excessive in their deeds. They become angels if they want to belong to God, and demons if they want to belong to Satan. Holy women, and that includes your mother, want to belong to God. They are angels."

"Master," [a disciple says,] "don't You think women were punished unfairly? Man, too, sinned."

Another disciple interjects, contrasting the woman's *punishment* with her *reward* foretold in the *proto-evangelium* (Gen 3:15).

"What about the reward? It has been said that through a Woman, Goodness will come back into the world and Satan will be vanquished.

[Jesus replies:] "First of all, never judge God's works. Second of all, realize that since evil entered the world through a woman, it is just that Goodness should reenter it through the Woman. What is at stake here is to cancel a page written by Satan. That is what the Woman's tears will do. Also, since Satan will forever not stop shouting, the Woman's voice will sing to drown his shouts."

[They ask:] "When?"

[Jesus answers:] "In truth, I tell you: Her voice has already come down from Heaven, where [from everlasting Her alleluia had already been sung]."

"Will She be greater than Judith?"

"Greater than any other woman."

"What is She going to do? What will She ever do?"

"She will overthrow Eve and her triple sin. She will do that with Her absolute obedience, absolute purity, and absolute humility. After that, She will stand up as a victorious Queen..."

"But Jesus, isn't that Your Mother? Isn't Your Mother the greatest Woman? She gave birth to You..."

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"Great are those who do God's will. That is why Mary is great. Any other merit comes from God. But She has done God's will, and that is Her merit. May She be blessed on account of it!" (*Poema*, VI, 853-856).

There is another luminous trace of the *proto-evangelium* in Maria Valtorta's commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

". . . Man, lifting his eyes to the Heaven he had lost, looked for the One who had justly chased him. Thus he felt anew that God alone could relieve his suffering, fulfill his desire for love, and sustain his moral strength with eternal hope and with a *promise*. At the same time Adam was *condemned*, he received the *promise* that the one who seduced him would be vanquished and man would be freed from the vile grip [of sin]. In other words, man's state of grace would be reinstated, and, as a result, so would the inheritance of the Kingdom of God. He would obtain all this through the Woman, the Virgin Who would give birth to the Emmanuel, the Saviour and Redeemer.

"Creation had been subjected to vanity. One could say that it was prevented from progressing towards its final perfection: the perfection of the spirit, as it increasingly mastered matter. Creation had turned its back on God, going down a slippery slope that not only went out of the earthly Paradise to earth, but also led from the earth to the kingdom of darkness and sin. But now creation was able to resume its journey towards light, towards its lofty purpose, God (*Lezioni sull'Epistola di Paolo ai Romani* [A Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans], p.215).

The Virgin Mary, Jesus says,

"has vanquished the cursed dragon" (*Poema*, X, 360-361).[54]

54. See also *Poema*, vol.IX, 133, 307.

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II. ISAIAH'S PROPHECY ABOUT EMMANUEL'S VIRGIN MOTHER (IS. 7:14)

One Sabbath day during the third year of His Public Ministry, Jesus was in His Mother's house in Nazareth. When He made a direct reference to His imminent death, Mary of Alpheus, the Blessed Virgin's sister- in-law, was surprised and frightened.

Mary of Alpheus, frightened, stands up and cries: "My Jesus!" She looks around as if she were afraid to see the deicides rise from behind the garden hedges and trees. "My Jesus!" she says again, looking at Him; she is distressed.

"What? Have you forgotten the Scriptures?" Jesus asks her. "Why are you so surprised because of what I said?"

"But. . . but. . . it can't be. . . You shouldn't allow that. . . Your Mother. . ."

"She is similar to Me: a Saviouress, and She knows it. Look at Her and imitate Her."

Mary has a serious, royal look, though Her face has turned ashen. She is motionless. Her hands are joined on Her chest as in prayer. Her head is lifted high, and She stares into space. . .

Mary of Alpheus looks at Her. Then she turns again to Jesus. "But still, You shouldn't talk about that horrible future. You're driving a sword into Her heart."

"That sword has been there thirty-two years."

"No! That's impossible! Mary. . . Mary's always so calm. . ."

"Ask Her, if you don't believe Me."

"Yes, I'll ask Her! Is that true, Mary? You knew that?"

Mary answers in a firm, albeit toneless voice. She says: "It is true. Jesus was forty days old when a holy man told Me. . . But even before that. . . *The Angel told Me that while remaining a Virgin, I would conceive a Son.* He would be conceived by God, so He would be called the Son of God, and that is what He really is. The Angel also told Me that the Eternal One had worked a miracle, making Elizabeth's sterile womb conceive its fruit. When I heard that, I easily remembered *Isaiah's words*: 'A Virgin shall . . . bear a Son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel' [Is 7:14; Douay]. . . I remembered *all* of Isaiah! All of it. Where he talks about the forerunner. . .

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Where he talks about the Man of sorrows, red all over with blood, unrecognizable... a leper... because of our sins... The sword has been in My heart ever since, and everything has driven it in deeper: the Angels' canticle, Simeon's words, the coming of the Wise Men from the East, and everything. Everything..." (*Poema,* VI, 966-967).[55]

55. See also *Poema,* V: 273; VII: 1702; IX: 133.

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III. ISAIAH'S PROPHECY ABOUT THE "SHOOT OF JESSE" (IS. 11:1)

This prophecy develops and completes the preceding one (Is 7:14) which said that the Emmanuel (Christ) would have a Virgin Mother. Together these two prophecies create a unified whole.

This shoot springing forth "out of the root of Jesse" (that is, David's father) is none other than Mary. On Her, the "Rod," the "Flower" (Jesus) blooms. On Him "the Spirit of the Lord shall rest" with His gifts (see Is 11:1-2).

Our Lord, in *Il Poema dell'Uomo-Dio*, recognized Mary in this Rod springing from the root of Jesse. He recognized Himself in the Flower growing from this root. He reminded a Scribe of the Sacred Scriptures:

"'And there shall come forth a Rod out of the root of Jesse, and a Flower shall rise up out of his root. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him.'" [Jesus then said:] "That Woman is My Mother" (*Poema*, VII, p.1702).[56]

56. See also *Poema*, IX, 176. According to the famous exegete Gaspare Sanzio, this interpretation of Isaiah's text "conforms to the Fathers' common opinion." To demonstrate the truth of this assertion, Father Passaglia has quoted about fifty passages from the Fathers, beginning with St. Justin. Only about ten ancient exegetes and a few more recent ones disagree.

Isaiah informs us also that the Messiah would miraculously take flesh from a Virgin of David's race.

This *Root* from which blooms a *Flower* (the Messiah) can only be the Virgin Mary.

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IV. JEREMIAH'S PROPHECY OF "THE WOMAN WHO WILL SURROUND THE MAN." (Jer. 31:21-22)

Jesus, in the third year of His Public Ministry, uttered the highest praise of His Holy Mother, in the presence of about forty friends in Nazareth. He justified His praises, "the King's secrets", with the words:

"I did it, so that the words of the Prophet may be understood: "A Woman will enclose the Man in Herself" (*Poema*, V, 273).[57]

57. This *Mariological* interpretation of Jeremiah's prophecy has been put forward by St. Jerome, St. Bernard, St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, Maldonat, Sanzio, Sa, Cornelius a Lapide, van Est, Menochio, Tirinus, and the following recent authors: Scholz, Meignan, Knabenbauer, Fillion, Reischl, Arndt, Herme, and Closen S.J. (See Closen's article [in Latin]. *Verbum Domini*, 1936, pp.295-304).

According to Knabenbauer, this Mariological interpretation perfectly ("quam maxime") suits the text, the context and parallel passages (*Commentarius in Jeremiam prophetam*, [A Commentary of the Prophet Jeremiah], Paris, 1889, p.387). Fillion unhesitatingly declared: "As long as the traditional [Mariological] interpretation gives the simplest and most obvious meaning, all other [interpretations] are arbitrary" (*La Sainte Bible*, vol.5, p.644, 3rd edition. [This is a French translation of the Bible, with the text in Latin as well. Translator.]

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V. THE "BRIDE" IN THE CANTICLE OF CANTICLES

Saint Joseph, just before the betrothal ceremony, reassured Mary that he would totally share Her vow of chastity. This is what he said to Her:

". . . I place at Your feet my treasure: my *absolute* chastity, for ever, to be worthy of being beside You, Virgin of God, 'my sister spouse, enclosed garden, sealed fountain' [Canticle 4:12], as our Ancestor [Solomon] says, *who perhaps wrote the {Canticle of Canticles} seeing You.* . . I shall be the guardian of this garden of spices in which are the most precious fruits and from which a spring of living water gushes out in a gentle surge: Your kindness, o spouse, has conquered my soul with Your innocence, o most beautiful one. You are more beautiful than dawn. You are a sun that shines because Your heart shines, You are full of love for Your God and for the world, to which You wish to give a Saviour with Your sacrifice of a woman. Come, my beloved spouse" and he takes Her gently by the hand and leads Her towards the door. All the others follow them and outside the joyful companions, all dressed in white and wearing veils, join them [and then they walk towards the betrothal hall] (*Poema*, I, 86-87).

Augustine Cardinal Bea has rightly noted how "the first and intrinsic meaning of the allegory of the Canticle of Canticles *leads directly to* its symbolic reference to the Mother of God. The Canticle of Canticles proclaims the relationship of grace and love [between God and His creatures]. This relationship was first realized in God's relationship with His people, then in Christ's relationship with His Church as well as with every single Christian. This love and grace relationship between Christ and individuals is *ideally expressed and made perfect* in the relationship between Christ and Mary, and God and Mary. Therefore, The Canticle of Canticles' application to Mary *fully corresponds to its goal and main lines.*

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"The Holy Spirit inspired the poet of the Canticle of Canticles and guides the Church's faith, prayers, and life. For Him millenniums are but fleeting moments. Long before Mary, His beloved Spouse and the Mother of the Son of God, appeared on the threshold of the world, the Holy Spirit had prepared the thread with which Her feast garments would be woven, and chosen the colours which would harmonize in the sublime painting of the Immaculate." (*Mariologia*, under the direction of Fr. Straeter, vol.I, p.34, Marietti, 1952).

John the Apostle gracefully applied, within an idyllic flowery setting, another passage of the Canticle of Canticles to Mary (Canticle 2:10-14). This took place in the Holy City, in the third year of the divine Master's Public Ministry.

. . . Springtime sunshine gently warms new leaves, trees in blossom and makes flowers open everywhere. The plain . . . is like a flowery carpet . . . .

"Johanna's gardens must be all in flower" remarks Simon Zealot.[58]

"Also the garden in Nazareth must look like a basket full of flowers. Mary is the sweet bee that passes from one rose-bush to another, then to the jasmines, which will soon be blooming, to the lilies, which are already in bud, and She will pick a branch of the almond-tree, as She is wont to do, nay, She may pick a branch of the pear-tree or of the pomegranate, to put it into the amphora in Her little room. When we were young boys, every year we used to ask Her: 'Why do You always have a flowery branch there, and You do not put the early roses in it?' And She replied: 'Because on those petals I can see an order written, which came to Me from God and I smell the pure scent of celestial air.'[59] Do you remember, Judas [Thaddeus]?" James of Alpheus asks his brother."

"Yes. I do. And I remember that when I grew up, I used to wait anxiously for springtime, so that I could see Mary walking in Her garden, under Her trees, the blossoms of which were like clouds, or

58. Johanna was Khuza's wife. [This is the Johanna mentioned in Luke 8:3. Editor.]

59. Mary was alluding to the blooming of Joseph's tree bough, which designated him as Her spouse. [See note 163 on p.316. Editor.]

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among the bushes of the early roses. I never saw anything more beautiful than the *eternal girl passing lightly among Her flowers,* while doves were flying around Her..."

"Oh! Let us go to Her soon, Lord! That I may see all that as well!" implores Thomas [filled with love for Mary].

[Jesus, complying with Thomas' wish, says:] ". . . Winter is now past."[60]

"Yes," [John says]. "And we shall go and say to the Dove:

'Arise, make haste, my Love,
and come, for winter is now past,
the rain is over and gone.
The flowers have appeared in our land...
Arise, my Love, and come,
{my hidden Dove},
show me Your face, let Your voice sound in my ears.'"[61]

"Well done, John! You sound like a sweetheart singing a song to his girl!" says Peter.

"I am. I am full of love for Mary. I will never see other women excite my love. Except Mary, Whom I love with my whole self."

"I said the same a month ago, didn't I, Lord?" says Thomas.

"I think that we are all full of love for Her. Such a noble, celestial love!... As only that {Woman} can inspire. And our souls love Her soul completely, our minds love and admire Her intelligence, our eyes admire and delight in Her pure grace, which gives joy without any anxiety, as when one looks at a flower... Mary, the Beauty of the earth, and, I think, the Beauty of Heaven..." says Matthew.

"That is true! We all see in Mary what is sweetest in women: the pure girl, and the most sweet mother. And we do not know whether we love Her more for the former or the latter grace..." says Philip.

"We love Her because She is 'Mary.' That's it!" remarks Peter.

Jesus has been listening to them and He says: "You have all spoken very well. Simon Peter is quite right: one loves Mary because She is 'Mary'" (*Poema,* V, 246-248).

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60. "Iam enim hiems transiit" (Canticle 2:11).

61. "Surge, prospera amica mea, columba mea, formosa mea, et veni. Iam enim hiems transiit, imber abiit, et recessit. Flores apparuerunt in terra nostra. . . . Surge, amica mea . . . ostende mihi faciem tuam, sonet vox tua in auribus meis" (Canticle 2:10-14).

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Shortly afterwards, Jesus, with His disciples, visited His Mother in Nazareth.

Judas of Alpheus asks Mary smiling: "Have You picked Your branch for Your amphora today?"

"Most certainly, Judas," [Mary replies]. "And I was contemplating it when you arrived..."

"And You were dreaming once again, Mother, of Your remote mystery..." says Jesus, embracing Her with His left arm and drawing Her close to His heart.

Mary raises Her flushed face and says with a sigh: "Yes, Son, and I was dreaming again of the first throb of Your heart within Me..." (*Poema*, V, 268).

Various other passages from the Canticle of Canticles were applied to the Blessed Virgin when Jesus came with some of His Apostles for yet another visit in Nazareth.

"Her garden is enclosed!"[62] Jude of Alpheus exclaims. "Yes," Thomas says, "and She is the rose in it."

"The lily among thorns,"[63] James says.

"The fountain sealed up,"[64] the Zealot says.

"Better yet," Jesus says, "She is the spring of living water gushing out forcefully from the Beautiful Mountain,[65] giving the Water of Life to the Earth, and springing, with Her perfumed beauty, upwards to Heaven" (*Poema*, VI, 945).

Jesus goes on to say that She is "like a Sister and a Spouse" to Him[66]. He then explicitly mentions the Canticle of Canticles, saying that She is "the Lord's Vineyard." The Peaceful One entrusted Her to vinedressers but She did not want to yield Her fruit to anyone except the Lord.[67] When they come to the entrance,

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62. "Hortus conclusus soror mea sponsa" (Canticle 4:12).
63. "Sicut lilium inter spinas, sic amica mea inter filias" (Canticle 2:2).
64. "Fons signatus" (Canticle 4:12).
65. "Fons hortorum: puteus aquarum viventium, quae fluunt impetu de Libano" (Canticle 4:15).
66. "Soror mea sponsa" (Canticle 4:9).
67. "Vinea fuit pacifico in ea, quae habet populos: tradidit eam custodibus, vir affert pro fructu eius mille argenteos..." (Canticle 8:11).

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Jesus knocks at the door, which was closed. Jude of Alpheus makes a comment. "It would be fitting to say: 'Open to Me, My Sister, My Spouse, My Love, My Dove, My Undefiled"'[68] (*Poema,* VI, 946).

They also apply to the Virgin Mother the image of the "Dove [hiding] in the clefts of the rock,"[69] as well as that of the "Lily of the valleys."[70]

One day, the Apostles asked Jesus why His favourite flower was the lily of the valley.

"This is My reply: 'Because of its humility.' Everything in it speaks of humility... The spots it loves... the attitude of the flower... It makes Me think of My Mother... This flower... so tiny! And yet how sweet is the perfume of one flower alone. The air around it is scented by it... My Mother also... humble, reserved, unknown, She asked only to remain unknown... And yet the perfume of Her holiness was so strong that it drew Me from Heaven..."

"Do You see a symbol of Your Mother in that flower?"

"Yes, I do, Thomas."

"And do You think that our ancestors foresaw Her, when they praised the lily of the valley?" asks James of Alpheus. "They compared Her then with other plants and flowers: with the rose, the olive-tree, and with the most gentle animals: turtle-doves,[71] doves..."[72]

"They all ascribed to Her the most beautiful things they saw in creation. And She is really the *Beauty of creation.*[73] But I would call Her Lily of the valley and peaceful Olive-tree, if I had to sing Her praises" and Jesus cheers up and brightens thinking of His Mother, and He quickens His pace to be alone... (*Poema,* VI, 785).

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68. "Aperi mihi soror mea, amica mea, columba mea, immaculata mea" (Canticle 5:2).
69. "Columba mea in foraminibus petrae, in caverna maceriae" (Canticle 2:14).
70. "Ego flos campi et lilium convallium" (Canticle 2:1).
71. "Vox turturis audita est in terra nostra" (Canticle 2:12).
72. "Columba mea in foraminibus petrae" (Canticle 2:14).
73. "Tota pulchra es, amica mea" (Canticle 4:7).

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C) Mary in the Fullness of Time

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In St. Paul's words, "when the fullness of the time was come" (Gal 4:4 [Douay]), the Blessed Virgin, chosen from all eternity and announced in the time that preceded Her, appeared in the fullness of Her fascinating reality. She came to be Christ's Mother and Associate as well as Mother, Queen, and Prototype of the Church, the mystical Body of Christ. God made Mary suitable for this role or unique mission by means of remarkable *privileges* which adorned Her whole life, from beginning to end.

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II. The Unique Functions of Mary in the Mystery of the Church p. 218

III. Mary's Remarkable Privileges p. 274

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I. THE UNIQUE FUNCTIONS OF MARY IN THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST

It is a matter of faith that since Christ is the God-Man (the Incarnate Word), He mediates between God and humanity. With this in mind, we must say that Mary is the Mother of the God-Man and the Associate of the Mediator who comes between God and the rest of humanity in the whole operation of our salvation.

Mary's two fundamental *functions* at Christ's side (being His Mother and Associate) are remarkably well depicted in Maria Valtorta's writings. This is suitable since Mary's greatness and the nobility of Her name are found precisely in Her role as Mother and Associate of the God-Man who redeems us.

One day, Jesus said to His Apostles that only those uniting perfect faith to perfect love will get to know the real meaning of the words "Jesus, the Christ, the Word, the Son of God and the Son of man." He then said:

". . . But I can now tell you that there is another name full of meaning. And it is the name of My Mother. Only those who add perfect faith to perfect love will succeed in understanding the true meaning of the name 'Mary,' of the Mother of the Son of God. And the true meaning will begin to appear clearly to the true faithful and loving ones in a dreadful hour of torture, when the Mother is to be tortured with Her Son, when {the Redemptrix redeems} with the Redeemer,[74] in the eyes of the whole world and for ever and ever."

"When?" asks Bartholomew . . . .

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74. [Instead of "when the Redemptrix redeems with the Redeemer," the English translation of *Il poema dell'Uomo-Dio* has "when She co-redeems with the Redeemer." Editor.] Here the Blessed Virgin is called "Redemptrix" although She is only the Co-Redemptrix. However, a little further in the same passage, Jesus says that Mary was to accomplish the supreme sacrifice "*with Me and through Me*" (Italian: "con Me, per Me"). Speaking of the Redemptrix acting *with* the Redeemer and *through* Him, is equivalent to saying "Co-Redemptrix."

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Jesus gives an evasive answer. However, after lunch, the Apostles ask Him about what He had said about His Mother.

[Jesus replies]: ". . . It would be a great thing indeed to be My Mother according to the flesh. You must consider that Anne of Elkanah is remembered as Samuel's mother [1 Sam ch.1; ch.2:1-11 (Vulgate: I Kings ch.1; ch.2:1-11)]. And he was only a prophet. And yet his mother is mentioned because she bore him. Thus, Mary would be remembered with the greatest praise, for giving Jesus, the Saviour, to the world. But it would be too little, as compared with what God exacts from Her *to fill the measure required for the Redemption of the world* [see Col. 1:24]. Mary will not disappoint God's desire. *She has never disappointed Him*. She has given and will give Herself completely both with regard to requests of *total* love and to those of *total* sacrifice. And when She has accomplished the supreme sacrifice, *with Me and {through} Me,* and for the world,[75] then the true faithful and loving believers will understand the real meaning of Her name. And for ever in the future, each true faithful and loving believer will be granted to know it. The Name of the *Great* Mother, of the Holy Nurse, Who will nourish all the children of Christ with Her tears, to bring them up for the Life in Heaven" (*Poema*, V, 248-249).

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75. The English translation of *Il poema dell'Uomo-Dio* has "with Me and *for* Me, and for the world." The Italian has "con Me, per Me, e per il mondo". Since "per" can mean "for" or "through," either translation is linguistically acceptable. But theologically, it seems to me that it should be "through." "Through Me" would indicate that Mary's sacrifice was possible only because Christ enabled Her to accomplish the supreme sacrifice with Him. But if we say that Mary "accomplished the supreme sacrifice with Christ, for Christ, and for the world," we may run into problems. For one thing, "for Christ" could be taken to mean that Christ would have needed Her sacrifice for Himself, as the world did; this would be rather blasphemous. Or it could be taken to mean that She accomplished the supreme sacrifice for Christ in union with Him, in the sense of doing it to please Him and help Him. But, again, She could not have helped Him had He not enabled Her to help Him: and this would be best expressed by "*through* Me." [Editor.]

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1. Mary Truly the Mother of the God-Man

I shall now analyze four aspects of Mary's divine motherhood:

a) the *fact* of Mary's divine Motherhood,
b) its *nature*,
c) its *necessity*,
d) its *consequences*.

a) The Fact of Mary's Divine Motherhood

Mary's sublime maternity was

"delicate as a rose sprung in a frosty winter scenery, pure as an April dawn, holy as an Angel's call, and humble as befitted Her Son, the Conqueror of everlasting pride" (*Quad.* '43, p.698 [Dec. 26; the Blessed Virgin speaking to the Seer]).

[Jesus speaking.] "God, to reveal Himself to {humanity} in the new and complete form, which starts the Redemption era, did not select for His throne a star in the sky, nor the palace of a powerful man. {He did not want} the wings of Angels as the base of His feet; {rather,} He wanted a spotless womb" (*Poema,* I, 4),

Mary's most pure womb; in it the Word took flesh.

[Mary says:] "I am the Mother of Truth, Who became flesh inside of Me... I am the Seat of Wisdom, Who made Me the Mother of the Son of God." "I am *the* Mother. Love has made Me the Mother of sweet Love" (*Quad. '44,* p.40 [Jan. 10]).

Jesus highlighted what went on during the nine months the Virgin Mother carried Him in Her womb. He said:

"Mary, the Completely Holy Woman, bore the Holy of Holies. She possessed the perfection of human holiness. She was already in an advanced state of divinization[76] . . . . She possessed Divine Perfection, who had clothed Himself with flesh, having asked Her to feed Him with Her Virginal blood. He asked Her to give Him His

76. "Divinization" must be understood here in its Eastern Catholic sense. It is the spiritual process by which a human being is made increasingly similar to God, without, of course, ever becoming God. For us sinners, divinization implies sanctification (becoming holier and holier) through penance. [Editor.]

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human shape and give Him refuge for nine months, during His human gestation. God nourished Himself with Mary. The God-Man was made from Mary. He came from His very Sweet Mother. I took My physical and moral characteristics from Her: kindness, humility, and patience. I received My Perfection from the Father, but I wanted to receive My physical appearance from the Most Blessed Woman, who was My chaste nest. As for My character, I wanted to receive from Her the most beautiful moral clothing there is" (*Quad.* '43, p.591 [Nov. 28]).[77]

b) The Nature of Mary's Divine Motherhood

[Jesus is speaking to His enemies in the Temple.] Jesus says: "You say: 'He comes from Nazareth. His father was Joseph, His Mother is Mary.' No. As a man, I do not come from a man's seed. As God, I do not come from a woman. Still, I *do* have a body. I received it by a mysterious working of the Spirit, and I came among you, carried by a holy Tabernacle" (*Poema*, VII, 1407).

"As a man, I do not come from a man's seed," means that Joseph was simply Christ's foster-father and provider. The father's doing, in the generation of Christ, was replaced by that of the Holy Spirit. As a man, then, Christ was born of a mother without a father.

"As God, I do not come from a woman," means that although Mary conceived God's humanity, She did not conceive Christ's divinity. As God, therefore, Christ is begotten by the Father without a mother.

Since, however, Christ is the God-Man [and His humanity is inseparable from His divinity], Mary is truly the Mother of God.

c) The Necessity of Mary's Divine Motherhood

Judas Iscariot joins in a conversation with the other Apostles.

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77. What is said here harmonizes perfectly with what the famous and learned professor Nicolas Pende of the University of Rome said in his conference [Christ's Biological Heredity from the Virgin Mary], in *Il Regno*, #1 (1942), p.34.

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"I think that the Word might have lowered Himself less than He did by being born like every other man, submitting Himself to the miseries of childhood and so on. Could He not have appeared in human form, already adult, in the appearance of an adult? And if He really wanted a mother, could He not have chosen one, an adoptive one, as He did for a father? I think I asked Him once, but He did not reply at length, or I do not remember."

"Ask Him! Since we are on the subject. . ." says Thomas.

"I won't. I upset Him and I feel as if I have not been forgiven yet. Ask Him on my behalf."

"I beg your pardon! We accept everything without so many clarifications and you expect us to ask questions? It is not fair!" retorts James of Zebedee.

"What is not fair?" asks Jesus.

There is silence, then the Zealot speaks on behalf of everybody repeating Judas Iscariot's questions and the replies of the others.

"I do not bear a grudge. That is the first thing. I make the comments that I must make, I suffer and I forgive. That applies to him who is afraid, which is still the consequence of his perturbation. With regard to My *real* Incarnation I say: 'It is just that it took place.' In future many people will make mistakes concerning My Incarnation, ascribing to Me the erroneous forms that Judas would like Me to have taken. A man seemingly solid in body, but in reality fluent like a lighting effect, so that I would and would not be flesh. And Mary's maternity would and would not be a real maternity. *I am really flesh and Mary is really the Mother of the Word Incarnate.* . . . I did not lower Myself by resting in Her. Was the manna enclosed in the Tabernacle perhaps humiliated? No, on the contrary it was honoured by being in that abode.

"Others will say that I, since I was not real flesh, did not suffer and did not die during My stay on the earth. Of course, since they cannot deny that I was here, they will deny My real Incarnation or My true Divinity. No, I am really One with the Father *for ever*, and I am united to God as Flesh, because as a matter of fact it is possible that Love reached what is unreachable because of His Perfection, by becoming Flesh to save flesh.

"A reply to all these errors is given by My whole life, which shed blood from birth to death and was submitted to everything that is common to man, except sin. Yes, I was born of Her. For your welfare. You do not know how much Justice has been mitigated since

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the Woman has become its collaborator. Have I satisfied you, Judas?" (*Poema*, III, 470-471)

Elsewhere, Jesus gave a clear answer to the above mentioned objections by Judas (and repeated by many other Judases since):

"I was able to do anything, that is true. But think about it: My humbling into a mortal flesh had to follow certain rules dictated by My goodness.

"The sin committed by man had to be atoned for by a man, not by the bodyless Divinity. The Divinity is a bodyless Spirit. How could It sacrifice Itself and redeem the sins of the flesh? I, God, had to atone for the sins of flesh and blood by being tormented in My innocent flesh and blood, which would be born of an innocent Woman.

"I could have suffered in My spirit, in My feelings and in My soul for the faults of your spirits, your feelings and your souls. But all the concupiscences, injected into Adam and his offspring by Satan, had to be redeemed too. To do this, the One who would be sacrificed for all your faults had to have a nature similar to yours. Also, this human nature had to be made worthy of sacrifice to God by hiding the Divinity in it. It is as if a precious stone of infinite supernatural value was hidden under common, natural appearances. . . . *So a Woman had to give birth to Me according to the flesh*, once I had been conceived by means beyond the flesh. . ." (*Quad. '43*, p:308-309 [Sept 6]).

d) The Consequences of Mary's Divine Motherhood

The dictations to Maria Valtorta take it for granted that Mary's divine Motherhood is a dogma. (It was defined as an article of faith at the Council of Ephesus in 431). The dictations focus rather on the *incalculable consequences* of Mary's divine Motherhood. (This is rather rare among Mariologists.) I will mention six such consequences.

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First consequence: a *real*, permanent, divine *relationship* or union which ties Mary to Her divine Son and the divine Son to His Mother.

Mary says: ". . . A mother never renounces her creature unless she is forced to. Whether her heart is asked to renounce her creature by her country or by the love of a spouse or even by God himself, she will resent and struggle against the separation. It is natural. A son grows in our womb and the tie that links him to us can never be completely broken. Even if the umbilical cord is cut, there is a nerve that always remains: it departs from the mother's heart and is grafted into the son's heart: it is a spiritual nerve, more lively and sensitive than a physical one. And a mother feels it stretching even to exceedingly severe pangs if the love of God or of a creature or the need of the country take her son away from her. And it breaks, tearing her heart, if death snatches her son from her" (*Poema*, I, 192).

The spiritual nerve mentioned here is exactly what Mariologists call the *real, perpetual relationship* which forever binds the Mother to Her Son and the Son to His Mother. This relationship, founded on Jesus' real conception, is fittingly described as follows. Jesus said to the Seer:

"Our hearts [Jesus and Mary's] were joined by spiritual fibers, and they always throbbed at the same time. . ." (*Poema*, IX, p.20).

Second consequence: Mary's divine Motherhood bestowed on Her a *matchless dignity and greatness.* Indeed, Her sublime function (to conceive the divine Person of the Word according to His human nature) caused Her to become the

"Mother of the peerless One" (*Quad. '45-50*, p.484 [Oct. 19, 1947]),

that is, the Mother of the One whose greatness and dignity are infinite. It follows that

"Mary's divine, virginal maternity means that Mary is inferior to none but God." [Jesus speaking to Valtorta.] (*Quad. '43*, p.311 [Sept. 9]).

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That is why the archangel Gabriel could say to Mary: "After God, who is like You?" (*Quad. '45-50*, p.484 [Oct. 19, 1947])

Third consequence: The Blessed Virgin's divine Motherhood enabled Her to see all things *with new eyes*. In all things and every single thing, the Mother of God *saw God*, particularly Her Son. This is because all things had been created through Him and for Him; therefore, they were His. Now, when Mary became the Word's Mother, all things became *Hers* also, and She saw them as such.

Mary says: "*Ever since I began bearing the Son, I saw everything with new eyes*: the *air* around Me, the *sun* that kept Me warm, the *moonbeams* that came down into My room to keep Me company when I meditated at night, the shiny *starlight*, the *flowers* in My little garden and the fields around Nazareth, the *water* that babbled in the fountain Joseph built to spare Me tiring trips and the moral suffering it caused Me to come out of My usual solitude, the little *lambs* with their childlike voices. . . In all that, *I could see the Lord*, My Son's Father, the Spouse of My Virginal spirit. *I could see My Child especially, for Whom all those things have been made.* His eyes were open inside of Me, so I now saw everything with the eyes of God, who was My Child.

"As a rising tide flows, so did virtues increase their power in Me. The more My Child grew, the more His perfection saturated His Mother, as if all the power that would come out of His holy body during the three years of His Ministry was flowing through Me as a radiant, spiritual ether that renewed Me entirely.

"Oh! My daughter! God is so good that He had the Angel greet Me as 'full of grace.' But the fullness of grace was achieved in Me only when *I became one* with My Son. My soul possessed the abundance of virtues when it was one with God.

"*From that time on, My preeminent virtue was charity. Until then I had had charity, but only when I became one with My Son did I go beyond the love that a normal creature is capable of. I then began loving with the Mother of God's heart.* I became ablaze. A fire is mere frost on a wintry field compared with the fire that was burning inside of Me then. *I no longer saw creatures with a woman's mind,*

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but with the mind of the Most High's Spouse and the Redeemer's Mother. These creatures were Mine.

"That is when My spiritual maternity began. I never needed Simeon to speak again for Me to know My destiny. I knew it, because I possessed Wisdom inside of Me. It was taking flesh inside of Me, and Its words flowed like blood through My whole being, rushing to My heart where I kept them. My Son's future life had no secrets from His dear Mother Who bore Him. It was a torture, because I am a woman. At the same time, it was a beatitude similar to My Child's beatitude, *because what makes the true children of God happy is to do God's will. And His will is to redeem those who are separated from Him, and reunite them to Him. His will is also to obtain the cancellation of sin and the greater glory of the Father.* When it comes to do God's will, My sweet Jesus and I, His Mother thanks be to God, are *the* perfect models" (*Quad. '43*, p.605-606 [Dec. 1]).

Fourth consequence: The Blessed Virgin's divine Motherhood was a *great source* of ineffable joys *and* inexpressible sufferings for Her.

First, a source of ineffable joy. We know this from the Blessed Virgin's words to the pious Seer.

"For a woman, besides loving the Lord, there is no greater joy than to have one's own child and say: 'I bore you, I fed you and carried you, I gave you my blood and my milk. Your flesh is mine and your thinking is mine, because you are the one I am thinking about and you are the one I am living for" (*Quad. '43*, p.666 [Dec. 14]).

"[Jesus'] birth was an ecstasy. That happiness came upon Me as the fragrance of flowers, and it was preserved in the living vase of My heart during My whole life. It was an indescribable joy. It was a human and superhuman, perfect joy" (*Quad. '43*, p.692 [Dec. 25]).

Besides being for Her the greatest source of joy, Her divine Motherhood was the greatest source of inexpressible suffering.

[The Virgin Mary speaking to Maria Valtorta.] "As each evening drew near, My heart would be crushed with this painful memory: 'one day less to wait, one day less before Calvary.' This would drown

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My soul with sorrow, as if a wave of torments had washed over it. This was a preview of the tide that would engulf Me on Golgotha. I would lean My spirit on that happy memory [of Jesus' birth] which had remained alive in My heart, as someone bends over a mountain gorge to hear again the echo of a love song, and to see his beloved's house in the distance.

"That was My strength in life. It was especially so when I mystically died at the foot of the cross. God was punishing Us, My sweet Son and Me, for the sins of the whole world, and My tears, the bitterest ever shed by a woman, were like a veil pulled over reality. In order not to tell God that this torment was too horrible and His hand administrating justice too harsh, I had to keep My eyes riveted on a luminous, beatific, holy memory [Jesus' birth]. That memory welled up at that time from the depths of My heart without My asking for it. It was like a comforting vision that told Me how much God had loved Me. It was a holy joy, and everything that is holy is saturated with love, and love gives its life even to things that seem lifeless. That is what we must do when God smites us [keep our eyes riveted on the memory of God's previous blessings]" (*Quad. '43*, p.692-693 [Dec. 25]).

Fifth consequence: Mary's divine Motherhood made it possible for us to have Jesus' Real Presence in the Holy Eucharist.

"Very few things remind you of Me on this feast day [of the Most Blessed Sacrament; Mary speaking]. Yet, I have much to do with it: had I not existed, you would not have received the body of the Word of God, Jesus Christ, our Lord, your King, your Redeemer and eternal Saviour.

"There could be no seas if water did not exist. The heavens would have no sparkle if there were no stars. The earth would yield no fruits, were there no seeds. This is even truer of the Eucharist, which has multiplied Itself for centuries. It would not exist had I not given birth to Jesus.

"I would like someone to draw a picture of Me as I appear to you now. My Immaculate Heart should shine with heavenly light and contain the Most Blessed Host, in which the divine Child is to be pictured. Underneath, put the inscription:

"'From Mary's
Virginal blood and heart,

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the supreme love gift:
Jesus-the-Eucharist.""[78]

Sixth consequence: an affectionate, most tender, delightful and ineffable *intimacy* between Mother and Son, between the Son of God and the Mother of God. This intimacy is so obvious in several pages of *Il Poema dell'Uomo-Dio* that it might almost scandalize some readers. Scandal for the weak!. . . Jesus was a model Son; Mary, a model Mother. This holds true of the most intimate effusions of Their hearts, the most and only perfect hearts.

Then Jesus says: ". . . I did not need anybody's advice. But when We were alone, and the disciples were scattered among friendly families or in nearby villages, when I stopped in Nazareth, how pleasant it was to speak to and ask advice of My kind Friend: My Mother, and have confirmation from Her graceful wise lips of what I had already seen. I have never been anything but 'Her Son' with Her. And among those born of woman there was never a mother more 'mother' than She, in all the perfections of human and moral motherly virtues, neither was there a son more 'son' than I with regard to respect, confidence and love" (*Poema*, II, 396).

Many pages in *Il Poema dell'Uomo-Dio* reveal the intimacy of Mother and Son. Let us limit ourselves to one example, taking place during the first year of Jesus' Public Ministry. Upon arriving in Nazareth to visit His Mother, Jesus meets a few women by a well. They greet Him.

[Jesus answers:] "Peace to you all. . . But please be silent. I want to give My Mother a surprise."

[The women say:] "Her sister-in-law [Mary of Alpheus] has just gone away with a pitcher of cool water. But she is coming back. They are left without any water. The spring is either dry or the water is absorbed by the parched land before reaching Your garden. We

78. Our Lady spoke thus to Maria Valtorta on June 4, 1953, (Corpus Domini). This text is still unpublished even in Italian.

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don't know. That's what Mary of Alphaeus was saying. There she is. . . she is coming."

The mother of Judas [Thaddeus] and James is coming carrying an amphora on her head and another one in her hand. She does not see Jesus at once; she is shouting: "I'll be quicker this way. Mary is very sad, because Her flowers are dying of thirst. They are the ones planted by Joseph and Jesus and it breaks Her heart to see them withering."

"But now that She sees Me. . ." says Jesus appearing from behind the group of women.

"Oh! My Jesus! Blessed You are! I'll go and tell. . ."

"No. I will go. Give Me the amphoras."

"The door is half shut. Mary is in the garden. Oh! How happy She will be! She was speaking of You also this morning. But why come in this heat! You are all perspiration! Are You alone?"

"No. With friends. But I came ahead of them. To see My Mother first. And Judas [Thaddeus]?"

"He is at Capernaum. He often goes there." Mary [of Alpheus] does not say anything else. But she smiles while drying Jesus' wet face with her veil.

The pitchers are ready. Jesus takes two, He ties one at each end of His belt which He throws across His shoulder and takes the third one in His hand.

He walks away, turns round a corner, reaches the house, pushes the door, enters the little room which seems dark in comparison with the bright sunshine outside. He slowly lifts the curtain protecting the door of the garden and He watches.

Mary is standing near a rose-bush, with Her back to the house and is pitying the parched plant. Jesus lays the pitcher on the floor and the copper tinkles against a stone. "Are you here already, Mary?" says His Mother without turning round. "Come, come, look at this rose! And these poor lilies. They will all die, if we do not assist them. Bring also some small canes to hold up this falling stalk."

"I will bring You everything, Mother."

Mary springs round. She remains for a moment with Her eyes wide open, then with a cry She runs with outstretched arms towards Her Son, Who has already opened His arms and is waiting for Her with the most loving smile.

"Oh! My Son!" "Mother! Dear!"

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Their embrace is a long and loving one and Mary is so happy that She does not feel how hot is Jesus. But then She notices it: "Why, Son, did You come at this time of the day? You are purple red and are perspiring like a sodden sponge. Come inside. That I may dry and refresh You. I will bring You a fresh tunic and clean sandals. My Son! My Son! Why go about in this heat! The plants are dying because of the heat and You, My Flower, are going about."

"It was to come to You as soon as possible, Mother."

"Oh! My dear! Are You thirsty? You must be. I will now prepare. . ."

"Yes, I am thirsty for Your kisses, Mother. And for Your caresses. Let Me stay like this, with My head on Your shoulder, as when I was a little boy. . . Oh! Mother! How I miss You!"

"Tell Me to come, Son, and I will. What did You lack because of My absence? The food You like? Clean clothes? A well made bed? Oh! My Joy, tell Me what You lacked. Your servant, My Lord, will endeavour to provide."

"Nothing, but You. . ."

Jesus goes into the house hand in hand with His Mother. He sits on the chest near the wall, embraces Mary Who is in front of Him, resting His head on Her heart and kissing Her now and again. Now He stares at Her: "Let Me look at You, to My heart's content, holy Mother of Mine."

"Your tunic first. It is not good for You to remain so damp. Come."

Jesus obeys. When He comes back wearing a fresh looking tunic, they resume their sweet conversation.

"I have come with My disciples and friends. But I left them in Melcha's wood. They will come tomorrow at dawn. I. . . I could not wait any longer. My Mother!. . ." and He kisses Her hands. "Mary of Alphaeus has gone away to leave us alone. She also understood how anxious I was to be with You. Tomorrow. . . tomorrow You will attend to My friends and I to the Nazarenes. But this evening You are My Friend and I am Yours.[79] I brought You. . . Oh! Mother: I found the shepherds of Bethlehem. And I brought You

79. "You are My Friend and I am Yours." This must be interpreted in the sacred light of the Canticle of Canticles in the Old Testament, and the Church Fathers' doctrine of Jesus the new Adam and Mary the new Eve.

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two of them: they are orphans and You are the Mother. Of all men. And more so of orphans. And I brought You also one who needs You to control himself. And another one who is a just man and has suffered so much. And then John. . . And I brought You the recollections of Elias, Isaac, Tobias, (now called Matthew), John and Simeon. Jonah is the most unhappy of them all. I will take You to him. . . I promised him. I will continue to look for the others. Samuel and Joseph are resting in the peace of God."

"Were You at Bethlehem?"

"Yes, Mother. I took there the disciples who were with Me. And I brought You these little flowers, that were growing near the stones of the threshold."

"Oh!" Mary takes the withered stems and kisses them. "And what about Anne?"

"She died in Herod's slaughter."

"Oh! Poor woman! She was so fond of You!"

"The Bethlehemites suffered a lot. But they have not been fair to the shepherds. But they suffered a lot. . ."

"But they were good to You then!"

"Yes. And that is why they are to be pitied. Satan is jealous of their past kindness and urges them to evil things. I was also at Hebron. The shepherds, persecuted. . ."

"Oh! To that extent?!"

"Yes, they were helped by {Zechariah}, who got them jobs and food, even if their masters were hard people. But they are just souls and they turned their persecutions and wounds into merits of true holiness. I gathered them together. I cured Isaac. . . and I gave My name to a little boy. . . At Juttah, where Isaac was languishing and where he came back to life again, there is now an innocent group, called Mary, Joseph and Jesai. . ."

"Oh! Your Name!"

"And Yours and the name of the Just One. And at Kerioth, the fatherland of a disciple, a faithful Israelite died resting on My heart. Out of joy, having found Me. . . And then. . . ah! how many things I have to tell You, My perfect Friend, sweet Mother! But first of all, I beg You, I ask You to have so much mercy on those who will be coming tomorrow. Listen: they love Me. . . but they are not perfect. You, Teacher of virtue. . . oh! Mother, help Me to make them good. . . I would like to save them all. . ." Jesus has slipped at Mary's feet. She now appears in Her Motherly majesty.

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"My Son! What do You want Your poor Mother to do better than You do?"

"To sanctify them. . . Your virtue sanctifies. I brought them here deliberately, Mother. . . one day I will say to You: 'Come,' because it will then be urgent to sanctify souls, that I may find them willing to be redeemed. And I will not be able by Myself. . . Your silence will be as eloquent as My words. Your purity will assist My power. Your presence will keep Satan away. . . and Your Son, Mother, will feel stronger knowing that You are near Him. You will come, will You not, My sweet Mother?"

"Jesus! Dear Son! I have a feeling that You are not happy. . . What is the matter, Creature of My heart? Was the world hostile to You? No? It is a relief to believe it. . . but. . . Oh! Yes. I will come. Wherever You wish, as and when You wish. Even now, in this blazing sunshine, or by night, in cold or wet weather. You want Me? Here I am."

"No. Not now. But one day. . . How sweet is our home. And Your caresses! Let Me sleep thus, with My head on Your knees. I am so tired! I am still Your little Son. . ." And Jesus really falls asleep, tired and exhausted, sitting on the mat, His head on the lap of His Mother, Who happily caresses His hair (*Poema*, II, 316-320).

2. Mary, Associate of Christ the Mediator Between God and Humanity

Maria Valtorta's writings show Mary intimately and indissolubly associated with Christ the Mediator in working out both phases of our salvation. She was His Associate *in effecting our salvation* (phase one); She has been His Associate *in applying salvation* to each member of humanity throughout the centuries (phase two). In virtue of Her association in *effecting* humanity's redemption, Mary is *Co-Redemptrix* with the *Redeemer.* In virtue of Her association in *applying* Redemption to each individual, Mary is *Dispenser of all graces.*

I will now expound at length these two fundamental questions:

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a) *Mary, Co-Redemptrix of humanity* (Mary collaborated in the acquisition of all graces);

b) *Mary, Dispenser of all graces.*

a) Mary, Co-Redemptrix of Humanity[80]

As Co-Redemptrix, Mary is associated with Christ the Redeemer in effecting humanity's salvation, that is, in acquiring all redemptive graces. Maria Valtorta's writings shed light on the following elements:

i) the *title* of Co-Redemptrix;

ii) the *association* of Mary as Co-Redemptrix with Christ the Redeemer;

iii) the *mode* of that association (as the *new Eve* united to the *new Adam;*

iv) the *effects* of this association (liberation from the slavery of sin and death);

v) the *foundations* of Co-Redemption;

vi) the *ultimate reason* for Co-Redemption.

i) *The Title of Co-Redemptrix of Humanity*

This glorious Marian title shows up with some frequency in Maria Valtorta's writings. (*Poema,* I:125,153; II:16; IV:718-719 [footnote written by her]; VI:1008; VII:1582; IX:308; *Quaderni 1943*, p.16, 190, 313, 584, 618; *Lezioni sull'Epistola di Paolo ai Romani* [A Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans], p.86, 98, 144.)

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80. The earliest attestation of the title of "Co-Redemptrix" is found in a hymn in a 15th-century manuscript in Salzburg. The title of "Redemptrix", however, prevailed until the 18th century. In the 19th century, "Co-Redemptrix" was used about a hundred times, while "Redemptrix" finally disappeared. At the beginning of the 20th century, Cardinal Lépicier O.S.M., more than anyone else, popularized the use of "Co-Redemptrix." During St. Pius X's pontificate, "Co-Redemptrix" was used in three official Holy See documents (published in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*). The first Pope to use this title was Pius XI (three times). "From now on, the term [Co-Redemptrix] demands our respect," René Laurentin wrote [in 1931]. "It would be most foolhardy, to say the least, to attack its legitimacy" ("*Le titre de Corédemptrice*" [*The Title of Co-Redemptrix*], in *Marianum,* #13 [1931], p.418).

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Maria Valtorta is not content using the title of Co-Redemptrix frequently: she also gives its precise meaning. Jesus dictates:

"She became the Co-Redemptrix, and, therefore, the Woman who *ransomed the earth*" (*Quad. '43*, p.618 [Dec. 3]).

Co-Redemption is indeed a collaboration in *ransoming* the earth (that is, humanity), in order to deliver us from the *slavery* of sin and death (brought to earth through the devil's envy). Such deliverance is achieved by means of a *ransom* (the merits and atonement resulting from the sacrifice of Christ and Mary).

ii) *The Association of Mary as Co-Redemptrix with Christ the Redeemer*[81]

Like Christ Her Son, Mary was

"called [by God] to the mission of Redemptrix" (*Quad. '43*, p.311 [Sept. 7]).

That is why

"Her heart, just as Her Son Jesus' heart, was broken by the human race and for the sake of the human race" (*Quad. '43*, p.312 [Sept. 7]).

"She is similar to Me: a Saviouress." [Jesus speaking.] (*Poema*, VI, 966).

"You had Me," [Jesus says,] "because thirty-three years before *I* did, Mary accepted to drink the bitter cup. On the lip of the cup I drank when I was sweating blood, I noticed the taste of My Mother's lips; and the bitterness of Her tears was mixed with the bitterness of My sacrifice. Believe Me, to have Her suffer even though She did not deserve suffering, that is what grieved Me the most. . . I remember [Her] life, which consisted in the martyrdom of the Co-Redemptrix. Without it, I would not have been the Man among men, nor your eternal Redeemer" (*Quad. '43*, p.313 [Sept. 7]).

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81. The principle of the Blessed Virgin's association with Christ in the whole work of Redemption was taught by Pius IX, Leo XIII, Saint Pius X, Pius XII, John XXIII, and Paul VI . . . (see G. Roschini, *Maria SS. nella storia della salvezza* [*Most Holy Mary in Salvation History*], Isola del Liri, Pisani, 1969, vol.1, p.179-183).

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The mission of Saviours, Jesus said to Maria Valtorta,

"is an austere mission. The most austere of all. The life of a monk who lives according to the harshest rule is a flower compared with the heap of thorns that the life of Saviours was" (*Quad. '44*, p.178 [Feb. 20] — *Dictation on Jesus' Passion and Mary's Sufferings*).

[Jesus speaking.] "Mary is the testimony of God's super-merciful love for mankind, because God worked the salvation of the human race *through Mary, the Redeemer's Mother*" (*Quad. '43*, p.308 [Sept. 6]).

[Jesus again speaking.] "All the Grace was assembled in one Woman and She delivered it to the world, that it might be redeemed" (*Poema*, III, 79-80).

Mary's association with Christ the Redeemer prescribed that She renounce every motherly right She had on Him. Every moment of Her life, She had to remember — as She actually did — that

"vocation is more than blood" (*Poema*, IV, 777).

It is relevant at this point to quote a conversation between Jesus and Judas Iscariot. This was the day after Jesus made a stern discourse in Bethlehem of Galilee. The discourse did not please Judas and he clearly said so to Jesus, because he thought it might harm Jesus.

"See what happened to [John] the Baptist?" [Judas says to Jesus]. . . .

". . . A martyr is always glorious," [Jesus answers].

"But by his death he prevents himself from being a master, and grieves disciples and relatives" [an obvious allusion to Jesus' Mother]. "He frees himself from every pain, but leaves others in greater suffering. . . ."

". . . Vocation is more than blood," [Jesus replies].

"And what about the fourth commandment?" [Judas asks].

"It comes after those concerning God."

"You saw yesterday how a mother can suffer for her son. . ."

[At this, Jesus turns to His Mother.] "Mother! Come here."

Mary hastens towards Jesus and asks: "What do You want, Son?"

"Mother, Judas of Kerioth is pleading Your cause, he loves You and loves Me."

"My cause? In regard to what?"

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"He wants to persuade Me to be more prudent, so that I may not have to suffer like our relative, [John] the Baptist. And he is telling Me that sons must have mercy on their mothers, by sparing themselves on their behalf, because that is what the fourth commandment prescribes. What do You say? You may speak, Mother, so that You may kindly instruct our Judas."

"I say that I would no longer love My Son as God, that I would begin to doubt whether I have always been mistaken and whether I have always been deceived concerning His Nature, *if I saw Him fail in His perfection, by lowering His thought to human consideration,* losing sight of superhuman considerations that is, the redemption, the effort to redeem men, for their own sake and for the glory of God, *at the cost of procuring for Himself affliction and hatred. . . .* His mission is greater than any other that was, is or ever will be on the Earth, and He certainly has from God suitable assistance for such a great mission." . . .

Judas, who is short of arguments, bends to lace a sandal and is left behind (*Poema*, IV, 777-778).

Mary's association with Christ lasted throughout His whole redemptive life: in the beginning, as it unfolded, and in the end.

"When you think about Mary," [Jesus says,] "I would like you all to meditate on Her agony. *It lasted thirty-three years and climaxed at the foot of the cross.* She went through that for you" (*Poema*, IX, 16).

[The Blessed Virgin said:] "We mothers are always united to our sons" (*Poema*, IV, 765).

MARY ASSOCIATED WITH CHRIST IN THE BEGINNING OF HIS REDEMPTIVE LIFE

Mary's association with Christ began with His very entry into the world to redeem it: an entry due to Mary. At that moment,

"Redemption began with Her sacrifice" [Jesus speaking] (*Quad. '43*, p.307 [Sept. 6]).

". . . I renounced My Son [Mary speaking] from the very moment I had Him. I gave Him to God. I gave Him to you" (*Poema*, I, 192).

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At the Annunciation, the Angel's[82] last words to Mary were:

"The world, Heaven, the Eternal Father are awaiting Your word!" (*Poema*, I, 105).

She did pronounce that word.[83] But at the cost of what suffering!. . .

"[Mary's] great sorrow was fundamental, sovereign, and absolute," [Jesus says]. It entered Her as violently as a meteor dashing down from Heaven *at the very moment She was ecstatically embraced by the creative Spirit.*[84]

"Happiness and suffering meshed together and were tied around Mary's heart. This began at the very moment She uttered Her supreme 'Let it be done,' the moment of Her most chaste marriage. Happiness and suffering were but one thing, as She had become one with God. Since She was called to the mission of a Redemptrix, from the start Her suffering was more acute than Her beatitude. Her beatitude [was fulfilled] only when She was assumed into Heaven.

"Mary was united to the Spirit of wisdom. He revealed Her Child's destiny to Her. After this, Mary no longer had joy, in the ordinary meaning of the word.

"While deeply hidden in Her womb, drawing life from Her Virginal blood, every hour that went by, I had ineffable love conversations with My Mother. Despite that, Her heart was continually filled with incomparable love and suffering, that rose like waves in a stormy sea, lashing Her furiously.

"My Mother's heart was wounded by the sword of suffering from the time when Light, coming down from the heart of the One and

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82. It is worthwhile to quote Valtorta's description of the Angel's appearance to the Blessed Virgin: "And in such light, . . . the Archangel prostrates himself. . .. The Angel must necessarily take a human appearance. But it is a transhumanised appearance. Of what flesh is this beautiful and gleaming figure made? With what substance did God form it to make it perceptible to the senses of the Virgin? Only God can possess such substances and use them so perfectly. It is a face, a body, eyes, a mouth, hair and hands like ours. But they are not our dull matter. It is a light that has taken the colour of flesh, of eyes, hair, lips, a light that moves and smiles, looks and speaks" (*Poema*, I, 103).

83. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto Me according to your word" (Lk 1:38; [Douay]).

84. This refers to the moment Our Lady conceived the Incarnate Word, the Redeemer, through the Holy Spirit.

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Triune Fire, penetrated into Her to usher in God's Incarnation and the Redemption of humanity. This wound was deepened every hour that went by during the holy gestation. The Divine blood came into being from a source of human blood; the Son's heartbeat accompanied the Mother's heartbeat; His eternal flesh developed from the immaculate flesh of the Blessed Virgin.[85] Her grief was yet greater when I was born to be the Light of a world of darkness. Mothers are happy when they hug their children, but for Mary, hugging Me meant that Her own martyrdom was drawing nearer . . . .

"Her maternal heart deserved all the joy a sinless Adam would have obtained. But, for your sakes, I had to smite Her with every suffering. For your sakes, She had to suffer when Joseph was upset. For your sakes, She gave birth in dire poverty. For your sakes, Simeon's prophecy turned the knife in the wound, re-opening and deepening the sword's bite. For your sakes, She was exiled into a foreign land. For your sakes, She suffered all the anxieties of Her lifetime . . ." (*Quad. '43*, p.311-312 [Sept. 7]).

"I knew what was My destiny," [the Blessed Virgin told Maria Valtorta]. "I knew it because I did not fail to know what was the Redeemer's destiny. The prophecies spoke about His great suffering. The Spirit of God, united to Me, gave Me more light than the prophecies did. That is why, as soon as I said 'I am the handmaid of the Lord,' I had embraced suffering at the same time as love. *Already*, I felt much grief *when I saw* that men would take Goodness-made-flesh, to cause evil for themselves" (*Quad. '44*, p.359 [May 20] — *The Seven Sorrows of Mary*)

Jesus said:

"The 'Let it be done,' those are the words that drew Me from Heaven into Mary's womb and put Me on the cross to redeem the world" (*Quad. '43*, p.111 [June 30]).

The Blessed Virgin's soul was deeply tormented also when She witnessed "Joseph's passion." Joseph suffered

85. Elsewhere Jesus speaks about Mary's love for Him "immediately after conception. Oh! What caresses She gave Me, through Her Virginal flesh, while I was still shapeless and tiny, throbbing inside of Her with My little embryonic heart! Oh! What heartbeats did I communicate to Her heart through the obscure embryonic tissues, in the depth of that living Tabernacle where I was taking shape in order to be born for you and die for you, crucifying My Mother's heart on My own cross for your sakes!" (*Quad. '43*, p.25 [June 4]).

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much when he discovered that Mary was mysteriously with child (Mt 1: 18-25). Mary called it their first Passion, which lasted several days.

"Oh! *Our first Passion!* Who can feel its intimate and silent intensity? Who can describe My pain when I realised that Heaven had not yet heard My prayer by revealing the mystery to Joseph?

I understood that he was not aware of it when I saw that he was respectful to Me as usual. If he had known that I bore in Me the Word of God, he would have adored that Word enclosed in My womb, with the acts of veneration which are due to God and which he would not have failed to accomplish, as I would not have refused to receive, not for My own sake, but for Him Who was within Me and that I bore, as the Ark of the Alliance carried the stone code and the vases of manna.

"Who can measure My struggle against the dismay that endeavoured to overwhelm Me in order to convince Me that I had hoped in vain in the Lord? Oh! I think it was the furious rage of Satan! I perceived doubt rising behind My back, and stretching its icy claws to imprison My soul and prevent it from praying. Doubt is so dangerous and lethal to the spirit. It is lethal because it is the first agent of the deadly disease called 'despair,' against which we must react with all our strength, so that our souls may not perish, and we may not lose God.

"Who can truly tell Joseph's pain, his thoughts, the perturbation of his feelings? Like a little boat caught in a great storm, he was in a vortex of conflicting ideas, in a turmoil of reflections, of which one was more piercing and painful than the other. He was, to all appearances, a man betrayed by his wife. He saw his good reputation and the esteem of his world collapse around him; because of Her he saw scornful fingers pointed at himself and felt pitied by the village people. Above all, he perceived that his love and esteem for Me had fallen, struck to death, before the evidence of a deed.

"In this respect, his holiness shines brighter than Mine. And I give this witness with the affection of a spouse, because I want you to love My Joseph, this wise, prudent, patient and good man, who is not separated from the mystery of Redemption, on the contrary, he is closely connected to it, because he suffered for it, consuming himself in sorrow for it, saving your Saviour at the cost of his own sacrifice because of his holiness.

"Had he not been so holy, he would have acted in a human way,

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denouncing Me as an adulteress . . . . But Joseph was holy. His pure spirit lived in God" (*Poema*, I, 165-166).

[One may wonder why Mary never told Joseph about Her divine maternity.]

"If [God] had not said to Me: 'Be silent!' I would probably have dared say to Joseph, with My face bowed to the ground: 'The Spirit has penetrated Me and now the Embryo of God is in Me,' and he would have believed Me, because he held Me in high esteem and because like those who never lie, he could not believe that others lied. Yes, to avoid hurting his feelings in future, I would have overcome My reluctance to praise Myself. But I obeyed the divine command. And for months after that moment, I felt the first wound pierce My heart.

"It was the first pain in My destiny of Co-Redeemer. I offered and suffered it in atonement . . . ." (*Poema*, I, 125).

When Joseph [finally] learned about the mystery from the Angel, he asked Mary to forgive him [for having thought of divorcing Her in secret. See Matthew 1:19.] At that Mary answered:

"I have nothing for which to forgive you. On the contrary, I ask you to forgive Me for the pain I caused you."

"Oh! Yes, it was a great pain! What a torture! Look! I was told this morning that my temples are white-haired and my face wrinkled. These past [three] days have been more than ten years of my life! But why, Mary, have You been so humble as to conceal Your glory from me, Your spouse, and thus allow me to suspect You?"

Joseph is not on his knees, but he is bent so low that he is as good as kneeling down, and Mary lays Her tiny hand on his head and smiles. She seems to be absolving him. And She whispers: "If I had not been humble in the most perfect manner, I would not have deserved to conceive the Expected One, Who is coming to pay for the sin of pride that ruined man. And then I obeyed. . . God had requested such *obedience*. It cost Me so much. . . because of you, because of the pain that you were to suffer. But I could but obey. I am the Handmaid of the Lord, and servants do not discuss the orders they receive. They fulfil them, Joseph, even if they cause bitter tears." Mary weeps quietly while speaking. So quietly that Joseph, bent down as he is, does not notice it until a tear falls on the floor.

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He then lifts his head and — it is the first time I see him do this — he presses Mary's little hands in his dark strong ones and he kisses the tips of the rosy slender fingers that protrude like fresh buds of a peach-tree from the circle formed by his own hands.

"Now we shall have to arrange for. . ." Joseph does not say anything else, but he looks at Mary's body and She becomes purple and sits suddenly, to avoid Her figure being exposed to eyes watching Her. "We shall have to make haste. I will come here. . . We will complete the wedding. . . Next week. Is that all right?"

"Whatever you do is all right, Joseph. You are the head of the family, I am your servant."

"No. I am Your servant. I am the happy servant of my Lord . . ." (*Poema*, I, 169-170).

MARY ASSOCIATED WITH CHRIST DURING HIS REDEMPTIVE LIFE

Mary was associated with Christ throughout His redemptive life.

Jesus says: ". . . Sorrow has been Our faithful friend and it had all the most varied forms and names" (*Poema*, I, 245).

Mary Associated with Jesus during His Private Life

Jesus said to Maria Valtorta:

"Mary's days of suffering were like a necklace being made. A new pearl was added daily. In the end, She met with Golgotha" (*Quad. '43*, p.618 [Dec. 3]).

Since She was deprived of the most necessary things, Mary gave Her Child

"milk and tears, milk and love. . ." (*Poema*, I, 208).

The Blessed Virgin told the Seer that the child's first gaze fell on His dear Mother, and His first word was "Mommie."

"He took His first steps with His little, tender feet, that were pinkish like the petals of a flesh-coloured rose. I used to caress those little feet and kiss them with motherly love and a worshipper's ado-

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ration. One day they would be nailed to the cross and I would see them contract out of pain, turn ashen and ice-cold.

"When He began to walk by Himself, He would fall. I would run over to lift Him up and kiss His bruises... I could do it then! But one day, I would see Him fall under His cross. He would be agonizing. He would be torn, bloodstained and covered with refuse thrown at Him by a cruel crowd. I would not be able to run to Him and lift Him up, then, nor kiss His bleeding wounds. I would be the poor Mother of a poor tortured Son!

"His first acts of kindness towards Me... He would pick little flowers in our small garden or along the road and bring them to Me. He would drag a footstool and put it under My feet so I would be more comfortable. He would pick up something I had dropped.

"His smile was the sunshine of our home! It was the riches that covered My little home's bare walls with gold and silk. Whoever sees My Son's smile has seen Paradise on earth. As long as He was a child, His smile was serene. As He grew into an adult, His smile became more and more pensive until such time it became sad. But He always had a smile for everyone.

"His smile was one of His divine charms, which crowds, delighted, followed Him for. His smile was already a loving word. When His voice was added to His smile, even clods of soil and wheat-stems quivered. The world has never heard another voice as beautiful. It was God's voice speaking . . . . How could Judas and the Jews end up betraying Jesus and kill Him, after hearing Him speak? Only God's unfathomable designs can explain such a mystery.

"His intelligence developed until it became perfect. I was filled with awe when I beheld this. His intelligence was tempered by such goodness that He never humiliated anyone. My sweet Son, how kind You were! You were kind with all, especially with Your Mother!

"When He became a young man, I refrained from hugging Him as when He was a little boy. But I was never deprived of His kisses or caresses. He Himself would invite Me to drink of His life, kissing His holy flesh. He understood My thirst for love, and I would drink of His joy" (*Quad.* '43, p.635-636 [Dec. 8]).

Mary's anguish when She lost 12-year old Jesus on the way back from the Paschal pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem was indescribable. It was three days of agony (*Poema,* I, 293-294). The torment of Mary's heart when Saint Joseph died was indescribable also. For thirty years,

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"Joseph was Her father, Her spouse, Her brother, Her friend, Her protector" (*Poema*, I, 302). After his death, "She felt as lonely as the shoot of a vine when the tree to which it is tied is cut down" (*ibid.*).

Mary Associated with Jesus during His Public Ministry

It was a heartrending moment when the Son left His Mother to begin His redemptive mission. After supper, Jesus was in the garden with Mary.

Jesus is speaking to Mary. At first I do not understand the words which are just whispered, and Mary nods Her head in assent. Then I hear: "And get Your relatives to come. Don't stay here alone. I will be happier, Mother, and You know how I need peace of mind to fulfil My mission. You will not lack My love. I will come quite often and I will inform You in case I cannot come home when I am back in Galilee. Then You will come to Me, Mother. This hour was to come. It began when the Angel appeared to You; it is now striking, and we must live it, Mother, must we not? After we have overcome the trial, we shall have peace and joy. . . ." Jesus and Mary stand up and they look up to Heaven: two living victims shining in the darkness.

Jesus, slowly but with a clear voice, says the Lord's Prayer, stressing the words. . . . Then they go back into the house, and Jesus, Whom I have never seen drink wine, from out of an amphora on the bookcase, pours some white wine into a goblet, and He puts it on the table. He then takes Mary by Her hand and makes Her sit beside Him and drink some of the wine . . . . They are both silent, waiting. Mary caresses Jesus' right hand and His knees, Jesus pats Mary's arm and Her head.

Then Jesus rises, and so does Mary. They embrace and kiss each other very fondly and repeatedly. They always seem to be on the point of separating and parting, but each time Mary embraces Her Creature over and over again. She is Our Lady, but She is still a mother, a mother who must part from Her Son, and is *fully aware* of the final destination of His departure. Do not tell me that Mary did not suffer! Before I had some slight misgivings, now I do not believe it at all.

Jesus takes His dark blue mantle, puts it on His shoulders, and

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pulls the hood on to His head. He arranges His haversack across His back, in order to be free when walking. Mary helps Him, and She delays endlessly in sorting His tunic, mantle and hood, caressing Him in the meantime.

Jesus goes towards the door, after making a sign of blessing in the room. Mary follows Him and at the open door they kiss each other once again.

The road is silent and solitary, white in the moonlight. Jesus starts walking away. He turns round twice to look at His Mother, Who is leaning against the doorpost, paler than the moon's rays, Her eyes sparkling with silent tears. Jesus moves farther and farther away along the narrow white road. Mary is still weeping against the doorpost. Then Jesus disappears round a bend of the road.

His Evangelical journey, which will end on Golgotha, has just begun. Mary goes into the house shedding tears and closes the door. *She also has started Her journey which will take Her to Golgotha. And for us. . .* (*Poema*, II, 12-13).

[Jesus comments His departure.] ". . . Mary [was] a gentle woman with perfect love, (because in the Virgin Full of Grace also affections and sensations were perfect) . . . . Mary had but *one* good thing, and *one* love on the earth: Her Son. The only thing left to Her. Her parents had died a long time before. Joseph had died some years earlier. Only I was left to love Her and make Her feel She was not alone. Her relatives, because of Me, of Whose divine origin they were not aware, were somewhat hostile to Her, because they considered Her a mother incapable of imposing Herself on Her Son, Who did not behave according to good common sense, and turned down marriage proposals which could bring prestige to the family, as well as material help.

"Her relatives reasoned according to common sense, to human sense — you call it good sense, but it is only human sense, that is selfishness — and they would have liked My life to comply with their usage. After all, they were always afraid that one day they might get into trouble because of Me, as I had already dared express certain ideas which they considered too idealistic and thought they might irritate the Synagogue. Hebrew history was full of teachings on the fate of Prophets. The Prophet's mission was not an easy one, and often brought about death for the prophet and trouble for his kinsfolk. And there was always the fear that one day they might have to take care of My Mother.

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"They were, therefore, irritated by the fact that She did not oppose Me in anything, nay, She seemed to be in perpetual adoration in front of Her Son. This conflict was to increase in the three years of My public life, when it culminated with open reproaches every time they met Me in the midst of crowds and were ashamed of what they considered My mania for vexing the powerful classes. And they rebuked Me and My poor Mother!

"Mary was aware of the moods of Her relatives and was able to foresee their future tempers — they were not all like James, Judas [Thaddeus] and Simon or their mother Mary of Clopas — but although She knew what *Her* lot was going to be during the three years of My public life, and was aware of Her destiny and *Mine* at the end of the three years, She did not recalcitrate, as you do. She cried. And which mother would not have cried because of the separation from a son who loved her as I loved Mine, or because of the prospect of long days devoid of My presence in a solitary house, or because of the dreary outlook of a Son doomed to butt against the malice of guilty people who took vengeance for their guilt by offending the Blameless One to the extent of killing Him?

"*She cried because She was the Co-Redeemer, and because She was the Mother of mankind who were being born once again to God.* And She had to cry for all the mothers who are not able to turn their motherly sorrows into a crown of eternal glory . . . .

"'Our' daily bread was to fulfil, day by day, Our part of the mission . . . .

"You ended the narration saying: 'And for us. . .' and you intended to say: 'for us who are so ungrateful to those Two Who have climbed Calvary for us.' You were quite right in writing those words. Add them every time I show you one of Our sorrows. Let them be like the church bell that rings and calls men to meditate and repent" (*Poema*, II, 15-18).

The relatives' opposition to Christ's evangelizing mission did not delay. It saddened Mother and Son beyond words. Jude Thaddeus, Jesus' cousin, went to Bethsaida at Mary's request to invite Jesus to the Wedding in Cana.

"A wish of My Mother," [Jesus said,] "is a law for Me" (*Poema*, II, 64).

Then Jude Thaddeus, prompted by his family, starts advising Jesus to be prudent.

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"I wanted to tell You. . . Jesus. . . be careful. . . You have a Mother. . . She has but You. . . You want to be a 'rabbi' different from the others and You know, better than I do, that. . . that the powerful classes do not allow anything which may differ from the customary laws they have laid down. I know Your way of thinking. . . it is a holy one. . . But the world is not holy. . . and it oppresses saints. . . Jesus. . . You know the fate of Your cousin the Baptist. . . . . You. . . what are You going to do? To what fate are You going to expose Yourself?"

"Judas [Thaddeus], you are so familiar with My way of thinking, and that is what you ask Me? Are you speaking on your own initiative? No, don't lie! You have been sent, certainly not by My Mother, to tell Me such things. . ."

Judas [Thaddeus] lowers his head and becomes silent.

"Speak, cousin."

"My father. . . and Joseph and Simon with him. . . You know, for Your sake, because they are fond of You and Mary. . . do not look favourably on what You intend doing. . . and. . . and they would like You to think of Your Mother. . ."

"And what do you think?"

"I. . . I. . ."

"You are drawn in opposite directions by the voices coming from High Above and those coming from the world. I am not saying from below. I say from the world. The same applies to James, even more so. But I tell you that above the world there is Heaven, and above the interest of the world is the cause of God. You must change your ways of thinking. When you learn to do that, you will be perfect."

"But. . . and Your Mother?"

"Judas [Thaddeus], She is the only one, according to the way of thinking of the world, who should be entitled to recall Me to My duty as a son: that is to My duty to work for Her, and provide for Her material needs, to My duty to assist and comfort Her with My presence. But She does not ask for any of these things. *{Ever} since She had Me, She knew She would lose Me,* to find Me once again in a much wider manner than the small family circle. . . Since then She has prepared Herself for that.

"Her unreserved voluntary donation of Herself to God is nothing new. Her mother [Anna] offered Her [Mary] in the Temple before She even smiled at life. And — as She told Me the innumerable times She spoke to Me of Her holy childhood, holding Me close to

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Her heart in the long winter evenings or in the clear starry summer nights — She gave Herself to God since the dawn of Her life in this world. And She gave Herself even more when She had Me, that She might be where I am, fulfilling the Mission given to Me by God. Everybody will abandon Me at a certain moment, perhaps only for a few minutes, but everyone will be overcome by cowardice, and you will think that it would have been better, for your own safety, if you had never known Me. But *She, Who understood and knows, She will always be with Me*. And you will become Mine, once again, through Her. With the power of Her unshaken, loving faith, She will draw you to Herself and will thus bring you to Me, *because I am in My Mother, and She is in Me, and We are in God*.

"I would like you all to understand that, both you who are My relatives according to the world, and you, friends and children in a supernatural way. *Neither you, nor anyone else know Who My Mother is*. But if you knew, you would not criticise Her in your hearts stating She is not capable of keeping Me subject to Her, but you would venerate Her as the closest friend of God, *the Mighty Woman Who can obtain all graces from the heart of the Eternal Father and from Her beloved Son*. I will certainly come to Cana. I want to make Her happy. You will understand better after the wedding." Jesus is majestic and persuasive.

Judas [Thaddeus] gazes at Him. He is thinking. He then says: "And I will certainly come with You, with these friends, if You want me... because I feel that what You say is right. Forgive my blindness and my brothers'. You are so much holier than we are!..." (*Poema*, II, 65-67).

Mary Associated with Jesus during the First Year of His Public Ministry

After the first Passover of His Public Ministry, Jesus returned to Nazareth with His first disciples (Peter, Andrew, James, Nathanael, Philip, John, and Jude Thaddeus). With them He visited His Mother. The sad news of Jesus' violent clash with the Scribes and Pharisees, after He drove the merchants out of the Temple, had already come to His Mother's ears (*Poema*, II, 104-107). Another day, when Jesus was discouraged, Simon the Zealot made a nice comment:

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"It is Your Mother that You are in need of to forget so many things. . ."

"Oh! Yes! It is My Mother! [Jesus replies]" (*Poema*, II, 282).

Jesus returns another time to Nazareth in the first year. He missed His Mother and thirsted for Her kisses and caresses. He tells Her candidly:

"Oh! Mother! How I miss You!"

"Tell Me to come, Son, and I will. . . . Oh! My Joy, tell Me what You lacked. Your servant, My Lord, will endeavour to provide."

"Nothing, but You. . . . . Let Me look at You, to My heart's content, holy Mother of Mine. . . . I have come with My disciples and friends. But I left them in Melcha's wood. They will come tomorrow at dawn. I. . . I could not wait any longer. My Mother!. . ." and He kisses Her hands. (*Poema*, II, 318).

The day after, Jesus sat with His disciples in the small garden behind the house. He spoke to them about the dangers the soul meets with as it lives in the midst of the world. He then gave them the luminous example of His Mother.

Jesus says: ". . . Look, there is My Mother over there. Can you conceive an inclination to evil in Her? Well, since love urges Her to follow Me, She will leave Her home when *My* love so wishes. But this morning, after asking Me once again — because She, My Teacher, used to say to Me: 'Son, let Your Mother be among Your disciples. I want to learn Your doctrine'; She, Who possessed that doctrine[86] in Her womb and even before in Her soul, as a gift of God to the future Mother of His Incarnate Word — She said: 'But. . . decide whether I can come without losing My union with God, and without My heart being corrupted by what there is in the

86. In D2, Maria Valtorta annotated this passage as follows: "Mary possessed wisdom as soon as She was immaculately conceived, but 'on the mountain,' She welcomed God's secrets. One may say that the Word dwelled in Her as soon as She began to exist. That is why some saints and Doctors of the Church, for instance St. Albert the Great, reached the conclusion that Mary had possessed the divine Word from the time Her immaculate soul was infused into Her flesh, right in Anne's womb. Yes, Mary possessed the divine Word in Her Immaculate Heart even before welcoming the Father's Word into Her most pure and inviolate womb (in order to clothe Him with flesh so that He would become the Redeemer). Also, the Word was truly Her Master even before He became Her Son."

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world and which You say penetrates with its stench, because My heart has always been, is and wants to be only of God. I search My heart, and as far as I know, I think I can do it, because...' (and at this point unknowingly, She gave Herself the highest praise)... 'because I find no difference between the spotless peace I enjoyed as a flower in the Temple and the peace I have now within Me, now that I have been a housewife for over thirty years. But I am an unworthy servant who does not know the things of the spirit well and is even less capable of judging them. You are the Word, the Wisdom, the Light. And You may be the light of Your poor Mother Who is agreeable not to see You any longer, rather than not be grateful to the Lord.' And I had to say to Her, while My heart trembled with admiration: 'Mother, I tell You: It is not You that will be corrupted by the world. But it is the world that will be purified by You.'

"My Mother, as you have just heard, has been able to see the dangers of living in the world, dangers also for Her. And You, men, should you not see them? . . ." (*Poema,* II, 333-334).

Shortly afterwards, Jesus returned for the third time during the first year of His Public Ministry to pay a visit to His Holy Mother. However, He first headed for the house of Alpheus, the father of Jude Thaddeus and James. Someone reminded Him of Alpheus' furious madness caused by the fact that his two sons followed Jesus. He also reminded Jesus that Alpheus' attitude caused Mary a great torment. He advised Jesus not to visit Alpheus. But Jesus, knowing that His mother was with Alpheus, hurried over.

At the far end of Alpheus' garden Jesus can hear "the crying of a woman [Mary of Alpheus] and the unbecoming shouting of a man [Alpheus]" (*Poema,* II, 390). Jesus meets His Mother on the threshold. She advises Him not to go in. Jesus goes in anyway. He finds the house in a mess and hears

a querulous voice . . . that of an old man who is cursing, accusing, complaining in one of those senile fits of temper, so unfair, impotent and painful to be seen, and so sorrowful to endure. ". . . there you are, my house is ruined, we have become the laughing-stock of

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the whole of Nazareth, . . . Why? Why? Because of a madman [Jesus]. A madman who has made my foolish sons insane." [He also makes a few choice remarks against] "that weak woman [Mary] now, who can't get Her Son to obey Her" (*Poema*, II, 391-392).

Despite the commotion, Jesus enters the room and says:

"Peace to you, Alphaeus."

The old man . . . suddenly turns round. "You are here? Here to scoff at me? Also that?"

Jesus, with His mother's assistance, helps him to lie down, gently and with extreme kindness. Alpheus calms down somewhat, but reproaches Jesus with having made him the laughing stock of Nazareth because of his two "rebellious" sons who abandoned their father

"on account of one who is little less than an insane man who roams about the world, drawing upon Himself hatred and derision, a poor man amongst the poor! . . . Ah! Misfortune has befallen us since the day my faint-hearted brother [Joseph, Mary's spouse] agreed to be united to that insipid yet overbearing woman who had full control over him. . . . Cursed be the Law of orphan heiresses! Cursed be fate. Cursed be that wedding."

The "Virgin heiress" has come back with the decoction in time to hear Her brother-in-law's jeremiad. She is even more pale. But Her patient gracefulness is not upset. She goes near Alphaeus and with a gentle smile helps him to drink.

"You are unfair, Alphaeus. But you are so ill, that you are forgiven everything" says Jesus, Who is holding up his head (*Poema*, II, 391-392).

Jesus tries by all means to put him back on the right track, but Alpheus is incredibly angry and lets Jesus know. . . that He should go. At this Jesus leaves him, saying:

"I leave My peace with you, Alphaeus. If you want Me, send for Me, at any time, and I will come" (*Poema*, II, 393).

Jesus considered Alpheus as

"a poor invalid, made intolerant by pain" (*Poema*, II, 393).

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Jesus took great pains to draw attention to the sufferings experienced by the Redeemer and the Co-Redemptrix due to the Apostles' faults[87] and, particularly, the attitude of Judas Iscariot, who was

"deceitful, shrewd, greedy, lustful, dishonest . . ." (*Poema*, II, 399).

"His eye is not crystal-clear and his heart even less so," [Mary told Jesus]. "He frightens Me. . . . He is more suitable to be the courtier of a worldly king, than Your Apostle . . ." (*Poema*, II, 398).

"The Pure, Humble Virgin, Detached from earthly wealth, could but feel disgust for that serpent." [Jesus speaking.] "I felt disgust, too. And only I and the Father and the Spirit know what I had to overcome to be able to endure him at My side" (*Poema*, II, 399).

Another abundant source of sorrow for the hearts of the Redeemer and the Co-Redemptrix was the hostility of priests, Pharisees, and Scribes who, like shrewd foxes, sought to drive Him into their dens to devour Him.

"They were thirsty for My blood. And they tried to set traps for Me everywhere to catch Me, to bring accusations against Me and get rid of Me. Their intrigue lasted three long years and it was appeased only when they learned that I was dead. They slept happily that night. . . . How much pain My Mother suffered through their fault! I cannot forget that pain" (*Poema*, II, 400).

One day, Jesus was in a coastal city. Joseph the shepherd, covered with dust, came to Him and handed Him three letters (little rolls made of thin parchment). Two were from Lazarus and one, from His Mother. She requested two things of Him: to remember His promise to send for Her "'to instruct Her in the Word,'" and not to come to Nazareth before communicating with Her. She

87. A little further on Jesus said: "The humanity of the Apostles! How much of it! I was carrying in My arms, to lift them up to Heaven, stones which weighed down towards the earth. Even those who did not contemplate the possibility of becoming ministers of an earthly king, as Judas Iscariot did, those who did not think of coming to the throne in My place, if need be, as he did, were still eager for glory. The day came when also My John and his brother craved for that glory, that dazzles you like a mirage also in celestial matters" (*Poema*, II, 400).

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told Him about Alpheus' death. "'At the last hour he wanted You,'" She wrote. "'Great was the mourning of the town. . .'" She added that the people's love for Alpheus made them upset with Jesus (*Poema*, II, 421-422).

Jesus broke the bad news gently to Alpheus' sons. Despite His Mother's advice to the contrary, He set out for Nazareth with His disciples. When He entered Alpheus' house and Alpheus' gloomy sons Simon and Joseph saw Him, they were taken aback and stood up. Jesus said He came to mourn with them (His cousins). But Joseph harshly said to His face: "Because of You our father died a vexed man" (*Poema*, II, 426). Simon, who was more understanding, told Jesus that his father, before dying, was anxiously asking for Him:

> "Your Mother sent for You, but they could not find You at Capernaum and he cried so much. And with his last ounce of strength he took Your Mother's hand and wanted Her beside him. He could hardly speak. But he said: 'The Mother is somewhat the Son. I am keeping Her to have some of Him, because I am afraid of death.' Poor father!" (*Poema*, II, 426-427).

Jesus wept quietly, while the others cried loudly and bewailed. Jesus explained to His two cousins that He did not heal their father because he did not believe in Him, resenting Him instead. Jesus exhorted them to give up their hatred, their grudges against Him and their own brothers James and Jude Thaddeus. Simon ended up giving in, though not entirely. He exchanged the kiss of peace with Jesus and his two brothers. Joseph. . . despite Jesus' heartfelt invitation, stubbornly maintained his grudge (*Poema*, II, 428-430).

During this trip to Nazareth, Jesus went to the synagogue and made His famous discourse on the text: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me . . ." (Is 61:1-3; [Douay]). The Nazarenes were cut to the quick. Upset and furious, they drove Him out of town and pursued Him to the hill-

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top. Jesus immobilized them with a glance, slipped through the crowd and walked away (see Luke 4:30).

This event was a sword in Mary's heart. On account of Her grief She exhorted Her Son to stay away from Nazareth, where all were ill-disposed towards Him and even the relatives considered Him mad and quarrelsome.

He then answers: "Mother, if the Son of man should go only where He is loved, He should turn His step from this world and go back to heaven. I have enemies everywhere. Because the Truth is hated, and I am the Truth. . . . I came to do the will of the Father and to redeem man. You are love, Mother, My love, that compensates Me for everything. . . . I shall be away for some time, to make You happy. When I am nearby, I will send someone to inform You" (*Poema*, II, 433-434).

The Blessed Virgin replies that He should send John, since She sees a little of Him, Her Son, in John. She then alludes to the fearful hour of the Passion:

"The blessed hour, *so much dreaded*, although the love of God and of man makes Me desire it, when You will cancel Sin, has not yet come. Oh! that hour! How Your Mother's heart trembles because of that hour! What will they do to You, Son? Son Redeemer, of Whom the Prophets predict such a martyrdom?"

[Jesus answers:] "Do not think about it, Mother. God will help You at that hour" (*Poema*, II, 434).

Upon leaving Nazareth, Jesus stopped over in Johanna of Khuza's house near Cana, and waited for His Mother.

"I am coming from Nazareth..." [He says to Khuza]. "I have to make My Mother come with Me for some time. I will go to Capernaum with Her. . . . My Mother is tired and has suffered much recently. She is worried about Me, and I wish to show Her that there are people who love Me."

"Well! Bring Her here, then! I will love Her as a daughter and a maid [would]" exclaims Johanna.

Jesus consents (*Poema*, II, 435-436).

Khuza, Herod's steward, immediately sends a carriage to Nazareth to get both the Virgin Mother and Mary of

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Alpheus, Her recently widowed sister-in-law. They arrive in the evening and are welcomed with signs of the highest respect.

Johanna is holding Mary's hand and smiles at Her saying: "You will allow me to serve You, will you not?"

"Not Me, but Him. Always serve and love Him. And you will have given Me everything. The world does not love Him. . . It is My grief."

"I know. Why {do some people dislike Him, when} others would give their lives for Him?"

"Because He is the sign of contradiction for many. Because He is the fire that purifies metal. Gold is purified. The scum falls to the bottom and is thrown away. I was told since He was a little child. . . [Luke 2:33-35] And day by day the prophecy is fulfilled. . ." (*Poema*, II, 437).

Jesus took His Mother to a village not far from the lake. An elderly couple invited Him into their rich property, assuring Him that after the day's work all the vintage workers would listen to Him.

". . . Is that Your Mother?" asks the landlord.

"Yes, She is. I brought Her here to you, because She also is now in the group of My disciples. The last to be received, the first in faithfulness. She is the Apostle. She preached Me even before I was born. . . Mother, come. One day, it was in the first times when I was evangelising, this mother [the landlady] did not make Me miss You, so kind she was to Your tired Son" (*Poema*, II, 438).

The lady of the house asks Mary what She feels like when She hears Jesus. Mary replies:

"A gentle ecstasy. I sink into My nothingness, and Goodness, which is He Himself, lifts Me up with Him. I then see in a simple glance the eternal Truth, and it becomes the blood and flesh of My spirit" (*Poema*, II, 439).

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Mary Associated with Jesus during the Second Year of His Public Ministry

In the second year of His Public Ministry, Jesus returned more than once to His Mother's home in Nazareth.

After visiting John the Baptist near Ennon, Jesus goes alone to Nazareth. As He nears His humble house, He sees His Mother also going home.

Her nephew Simon is with Her, carrying a bundle of firewood. Jesus calls Her: "Mother!"

Mary turns round exclaiming: "Oh! My Blessed Son!" and they both run to meet each other, while Simon drops the bundle to the ground and like Mary runs towards Jesus and greets Him wholeheartedly.

"Mother, I have come. Are You happy now?"

"So happy, Son. But... If You came only because I begged You, I tell You that it is not right for Me or for You to listen to the call of blood, rather than to Your Mission."

"No, Mother. I have come for other reasons as well."

"Is it really true, Son? I thought, I wanted to believe that they were false rumours and that You were not hated so much..." There are tears in Mary's voice and in Her eyes.

"Do not weep, Mother. It grieves Me so much. I need Your smiles."

"Yes, Son. That is true. You see so many harsh faces of enemies, that You need so much smiling love. But here, see? Here is She Who loves You on behalf of everybody..." Mary is leaning lightly on Her Son, Who embraces Her shoulders, and while walking slowly towards the house, She endeavours to smile, to expel all grief from Jesus' heart.

Simon has picked up his bundle and is walking beside Jesus.

"You are pale, Mother. Have they grieved You so much? Have You not been well? Have You tired Yourself excessively?"

"No, Son, no one has grieved Me. My only sorrow is that You are far from Me and they do not love You. Here everybody is good to Me. I will not even mention Mary and Alphaeus [of Sarah],[88]

88. This man was about five years older than Jesus' Mother. He used to be very

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You know what they are like. Also Simon, see how good he is. He is always like that. He has helped Me all these past months. He is now supplying Me with wood. He is so good. Also Joseph is. They are so thoughtful of their Mary."

"May God bless you, Simon, and may He bless also Joseph. I forgive you for not loving Me yet as the Messiah. Oh! You will eventually love Me as Christ! But how could I forgive you for not loving Her?"

"It is fair and peaceful to love Mary, Jesus. You are loved, too. . . only, see, we are too much afraid for You."

"Yes, you love Me with a human love. You will come to the other love."

"You, too, Son, are pale looking and thin."

"Yes, You look older. I can see that, too" remarks Simon.

They go into the house, and Simon, after laying the firewood in its place, withdraws discreetly.

"Son, now that We are alone, tell Me the truth. The whole truth. Why did they drive You away?" Mary speaks holding Her hands on Jesus' shoulders and staring at His thin face.

Jesus smiles kindly but sadly: "Because I tried to bring man back to honesty, justice, and to the true religion."

"But who accuses You? The people?"

"No, Mother, the Pharisees and the scribes, with the exception of a few just ones amongst them."

"But what have You done to incur their accusations?"

"I told them the truth. Do You know that it is the biggest mistake with men?"

"What could they say to justify their accusations?"

"They told lies. The ones You know and many more."

"Tell Your Mother. Place Your sorrow, all Your sorrow on My bosom. A mother's bosom is accustomed to sorrow and is happy to consume it, to remove it from the heart of her son. Give Me Your sorrow, Jesus. Come here, as You were wont to do when a child, and leave all Your bitterness."

Jesus sits on a little stool at His Mother's feet and tells Her all about the months spent in Judea, without any grudge and without concealing anything.

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fond of Mary's parents before She was born and frequently visited them afterwards. [Editor.]

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Mary caresses His hair with a heroic smile on Her lips to fight back the tears shining in Her blue eyes.

Jesus mentions also the necessity of approaching women to redeem them and His grief at not being able to do so owing to the wickedness of men.

Mary nods assent and then She decides: "Son, You must not deny Me what I want. *From now on I will come with You when You go away. I will come at any time, in any season, to any place. I will defend You from false accusations. My simple presence will cause the mud to fall off.* And Mary [Jesus' aunt] will come with Me. She is so anxious to. That is what is needed near the Holy One, against the demon and against the world: a mother's heart" (*Poema*, III, 47-49).

Shortly afterwards, Jesus left Nazareth with His cousins. He went to Cana and entered Susannah's house. (She was the bride at the wedding in Cana). She is now ill. Susannah's husband asks Jesus to heal her. Jesus consents, on the condition, however, that she follow Him as a disciple.

"You are suffering agonies because of your wife. But if I restored her to health and I got her to become My disciple for ever, what would you say?"

"That. . . You are entitled to do it and that. . . I will imitate Abraham in his readiness to the sacrifice."

"You are right. Listen, everybody: the time of My sacrifice is approaching. Like a course of water it is running fast and incessantly to the sea. I must accomplish what I have to do. And human harshness precludes so much of the field of My mission. *My Mother and Mary of Alpheus will come with Me* when I go away amongst people that do not love Me yet or will never love Me. My wisdom knows that women will be able to help the Master in those precluded fields" (*ibid.*, 51-52).

Jesus then received Susannah among the women following Him. Immediately after this, He added Salome to their numbers, with her husband Zebedee's consent. (Salome was James and John's mother).

From there, Jesus went to Nazareth, where He conse-

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crated Anna-Leah to God. She was a 16 year-old girl, and became the first Christian virgin (*ibid.*, 72-77).

During His second Paschal pilgrimage, in the second year of His Public Ministry, Jesus met His Mother at Lazarus' home in Bethany.

> They kiss each other and in Mary's kiss there is the anguish of a mother who has been afraid for a long time and now that the terror, which had seized her, is dissolving, she feels the tiredness of the effort she made, and evaluates the risks He has run. . . (*ibid.*, 380).

Jesus comforted Her and They had an intimate conversation,

> "loving each other and resting in each other's love" (*ibid.*, 388).

The Blessed Virgin accompanied Jesus and the Apostles on a pilgrimage to the nativity cave in Bethlehem. She told them "of the infinitely simple and infinitely great birth" of Her Son (*Poema*, III, 465).

Mary accompanied them to Beth-Tsur where She stayed for some time at Eliza's, Her former companion in the Temple, who was now ill (*ibid.*, 472ff). She then went to Judas' house in Kerioth (*ibid.*, 519), returning afterwards to Beth-Tsur. From there She went to Bether with Eliza who began to follow Christ (*ibid.*, 593-595). Back in Nazareth, She welcomed Mary of Magdala, who had repented by now. Mary of Magdala requested something from the Blessed Virgin:

> "Teach me what I must do to belong to Jesus" (*Poema*, IV, 694).

The Virgin Mary instructed her and brought her to Capernaum to meet Jesus and His disciples. Martha joined them at this point, and the group travelled to Bethsaida, Magdala, Tiberias, Cana and Nazareth. Mary again set off, this time to Bethlehem of Galilee and Caesarea. She then returned to Nazareth. As they went through towns where Mary of Magdala had previously caused scandals, Christ's enemies, seeing her in His group, made fun of

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Jesus and criticized Him relentlessly. This distressed Jesus' Holy Mother. She did not hesitate to say:

"I feel as if My heart were wrapped in burning thorns. And every time I breathe I am pierced by them. But He must not know! I strive to appear serene, in order to support Him by My serenity. If His Mother does not console Him, where is My Jesus going to find comfort?" (*ibid.*, 718).

Mary followed Jesus and His disciples to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. Hearing of traps set up for Her Son, Mary weeps. . . Jesus says to Her:

". . . It is for the love of {mankind}. Let us drink Our chalice with good will. Is that right?"

Mary stifles Her tears and replies: "Yes." A tortured heart-rending "yes" (*ibid.*, 1036).

After spending a few days in Bethany, Jesus and Mary went to Jericho with some of the Apostles and some women disciples. Later, having crossed the Jordan River, they pushed on to Gerasha. That is where, after Jesus preached, an anonymous woman admired Him and proclaimed His Mother blessed (*Poema*, IV, 1082-1083). Some time later, when Jesus and His Mother were by Themselves, They took turns exclaiming:

"How much hatred, Son!"
"How much love!"
"How much bitterness, My dear Jesus!"
"How much sweetness!"
"How much incomprehension, My Son!"
"How much comprehension, Mother!"
"Oh! My darling, My dear Son!"
"Mother! Joy of God and Mine! Mother!" (*ibid.*, 1108).

Jesus and Mary parted on the following day. Mary returned to Nazareth with Peter and the women disciples (*ibid.*, 1120f).

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Mary Associated with Jesus during the Third Year of His Public Ministry

Early in the third year of His Public Ministry, Jesus returned to Nazareth with both of His cousins and Peter and Thomas. Thomas thought that it was such a great joy to be with Jesus' Mother that he could not find adequate words (*Poema,* V, 180). After spending a day with His Mother, Jesus left with His disciples for Tiberias and Capernaum.

When spring had come, Jesus again came to His Mother's home in Nazareth. This time He brought Manaen,[89] the Apostles, a few disciples and a few women (about forty people in all). On this occasion He gave a marvellous speech about His Mother (*Poema,* V, 268-273).[90]

Later on, Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem with the Apostles, while the Blessed Virgin was already in Bethany. Now, Mary of Magdala learned from a Herodian that there was a plot against the Master. Immediately, she set off to warn Jesus. Jesus retraced His steps in the direction of Cana, instructing the Magdalene to come there with His Virgin Mother. He met His Mother, however, long before arriving in Cana. She had come by cart with the pious women disciples. Jesus' Mother, in tears, could not help but exclaim

". . . How everybody hates You, Son!" . . .

"But You can see that the Father sees to everything," [Jesus replies]. "So do not weep! I defy all the hatred of the world bravely. But one tear of Yours depresses Me..." (*Poema,* V, 404).

Reassured by Manaen, Jesus decides to return to Jerusalem for the Paschal feasts.

[Mary] is full of love and in great distress for Her persecuted Son (*ibid.*, p.545).

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89. Manaen, King Herod's foster-brother, eventually became a very active disciple. See the Book of Acts, 13:1. [Editor.]

90. See p.34 [Publisher — Kolbe's.]

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Jesus pursues His evangelization. After a cautious journey, He feels the need to return to Nazareth to be with His Mother. He spends one month with Her (*Poema*, VI, 990).

". . . How sweet it is to be back home. . . Especially to be with you, Mother, after travelling so much in the midst of men."

"As they get to know You," [Mary goes on sadly,] "they divide into two groups: those who love You. . . and those who hate You. . . And the largest group is those who hate You. . ."

"Evil senses it is on the verge of being vanquished. It is furious. . . and it makes people furious. . ."

. . . ". . . You are so afflicted. . . I understand. . . And I would like to do so much for You. . ."

"You are doing a great deal, Mother. I thank You for all You are doing. . ."

"Oh! I'm not much help, My Son!. . ."

[Jesus disagrees, saying:] "Mother! Mother! Don't speak like this! My strength comes from Your prayers. My spirit finds rest when I think about You. Right now My heart is comforted, because I'm resting My head on Your blessed heart. . . dear Mother!. . ."

. . . They pause, filled with love [for one another] (*ibid.*, 947-948).

During His stay in Nazareth, Jesus spoke to his disciples in the Virgin Mary's presence. He made a very clear allusion to His dishonourable death. (Since this passage follows immediately the one quoted on p.93, it would be good to reread it before continuing.)

". . . What else, dear Mary?," [Mary of Alpheus asks.] "Jesus is overcoming. He is performing wonders. The crowds following Him are getting bigger and bigger!. . . Right?"

[Mary's hands are still folded on Her bosom as in prayer. She is staring into space with Her head held high.] She answers every question with "yes." She is neither anxious, nor happy. She has peacefully accepted things the way they are. . .

"Well, then, what else is driving a sword into Your heart?"

"Oh. . . everything. . ."

"And You remain that calm? That serene? Ever since You came here as a young bride, You have always been like that! That was thirty-three years ago! It feels like it was yesterday. . . How can You?

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I. . . I'd be going crazy. . . I'd. . . I don't know what I'd do. . . I. . . No! It's impossible for a mother to know that and stay calm!"

"*Though I am a mother, above all I am God's daughter and handmaid.* . . Where do I find peace of mind? In doing God's will. My serenity? In doing God's will. If I had to do a man's will, I might be uneasy: even the wisest man can make mistakes when he imposes his will. Not so with God! If He wanted Me to be the Mother of His Christ, how could I think it is cruel and lose My serenity? When I think about what Redemption will mean for Him and for Me, yes, for Me too, am I to become flustered? Am I to worry how I shall overcome that terribly dreadful hour?. . ."

Mary has an involuntary start, as though She had a fit of shivering. She clasps Her hands as if to prevent them from shaking, as if to pray more ardently. Her face turns even more ashen, and She lowers Her eyelids over Her sky-blue eyes, fluttering them with anguish. She sighs, filled with anxiety. She manages to control Her voice, going on to say:

"The One who has imposed His will on Me, the One I serve lovingly and trustingly, He will help Me when that hour comes . . . ."

"Yes, Mother," [Jesus replies]. "Love will help Us, and We will help one another in love. *We shall redeem with love.* . ."

[Mary says:] "*With love and suffering. . . Yes. Together.* . ."

No one speaks. . . The Apostles and women disciples, sitting around the two main protagonists of the future tragedy of Golgotha, look like statues deep in thought. . .

Aurea[91] is petrified on her stool. . . Yet, she is the first one to regain her senses. Sliding down on her knees, she lands just besides Mary. She hugs Mary's knees and leans her head on them, saying: "All that for me too!. . . Do I *ever* cost You both a lot! Do I *ever* love You both for what I'm going to cost You! Oh! Mother of my God, bless me so I won't cost both of You all that for nothing. . ."

"Yes, daughter," [the Blessed Virgin replies]. "Don't worry! God will help you, too, if you always accept His will" (*Poema*, VI, 967-968).

During Their stay in Nazareth, Jesus and Mary have an intimate discussion. They talk about their relatives, especially Joseph of Alpheus. (He is the eldest of Jesus'

91. A young pagan girl delivered from slavery and converted to Christ.

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four cousins, Saint Joseph's nephews). He is "always stubborn, . . . [and] authoritarian. He is as obstinate in his ideas as his father was" (*ibid.*, 970). Jesus says to Mary:

". . . Mother, I want You to be with Me in Capernaum for a while. . . Then You come back here while I go north, near Syro-Phoenicia. I will see You on My way down to Judea, the stubborn sheep of Israel. . ." (*ibid.*, 971).

The Virgin Mary's words to Aurea, who eagerly wished to stay with Her, are noteworthy:

"Daughter, you can't have everything! See? I'm not staying with My Jesus either. I have given Him to all of you, and I stay by Myself, far from Him, while He goes all over Palestine to preach, heal and save young girls. . ."

"That's true. . ." [Aurea replies].

[Mary goes on.] "If I had wanted Jesus all to Myself, you couldn't have been saved, Aurea. . . If I had wanted Him all to Myself, no one's soul would be saved. Think how great My sacrifice is. I give a Son to all of you: He will be immolated for your souls. Besides, you and I will always be united, because the women disciples are, and will always be, united around Christ. We will be a great family united in our love for Him."

"That's true. . ." (*ibid.*, 983-984).

[Later on, Mary said:] "I am the Mother of all. . . and I must not limit My motherhood to one person alone. I am not even possessive of Jesus. . . See how I let Him go and don't hold Him back?. . . How I yearn to be with Him! But He decided I should stay here until He tells Me to come. So I stay. When He comes by, that makes Me a happy mother. When I travel with Him, that makes Me a happy disciple. When I stay here by Myself, it makes Me a happy worshipper who does the Lord's will."

[Mary of Alpheus says:] "This Lord is Your Son, Mary. . ."

"Yes, but He is still My Lord. . ." (*Poema*, VI, 995).

After spending one month in Nazareth, Jesus set out with His disciples for Bethlehem of Galilee, Tiberias and Capernaum. He asked His Mother to meet Him in Capernaum (*ibid.*, 1025) and to follow Him to Magdala and other places (*ibid.*, 1046ff). A few words of Jesus to His Mother sometimes conveyed a great deal of meaning:

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". . . Whenever I am back, the first few hours I spend with You renew My strength. Your sweetness makes Me recover quickly from all the disagreeable, bitter cups I must drink in the world. . ." (*ibid.*, 1171).

There is an unforgettable encounter between Jesus and His Mother in the Wood of Matthias, during winter. They seem a "perfect couple": Jesus rests His head on His Mother's knees.

Jesus is like a sad, tired child, who has recourse to the only woman who can comfort Him. Mary caresses Jesus' hair and His smooth forehead. She acts as though She wanted to drive away all Her Son's weariness and sorrow. . . (*Poema*, VII, 1331).

They talk about the attempt to make Him king, and His Mother tells Him Her great desire: to be with Him all the time.

"I would rather be with You, even if it means getting muddy, get caught in the wind, sleep in the open, be persecuted, tired, with no roof over Our heads, no fire, no bread. Though You often have to live like that, I would rather be with You than stay home. . . . You and Me, Me and You. You would suffer less, I would suffer less. . . I could always . . . shield You against the cold, against hard stones and especially hard hearts. I would shield You with My love, My chest, My arms. . ." (*ibid.*, p.1335).

Jesus informs Her that He cannot take Her with Him for the time being. He must evangelize Judea and Samaria. That is why He advises Her to prepare to meet Him in the spring and to stay then in Jerusalem. In the meantime, He hopes to see Her a few times.

"Jesus holds Her close against His chest and She cries on His heart. . . (*Poema*, VII, 1336).

At last He leaves Her, and weeps.

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MARY ASSOCIATED WITH CHRIST AT THE END AND CLIMAX OF HIS REDEMPTIVE LIFE: THE PASSION

The three years of His Public Ministry having come to an end, Jesus began the "preparatory phase for His Passion." One month before Passover, Lazarus rode a carriage to Nazareth to take Mary and the women disciples of Galilee. He took them to James' house in Ephraim; that is where Jesus was staying with His Apostles. The Blessed Virgin was sad: Jesus' hour was coming...

[Mary speaking to Mary of Alpheus:] ". . . I can say I don't have a Son anymore, because He belongs to God and to His mission..." (*Poema,* VIII, 258-259).

They set out for Bethany (*ibid.,* 344ff), where Jesus' redemptive Passion would begin.

[Jesus addressed all of us in the following dictation to the Seer.] "When you think about Mary, I would like you all to meditate on Her *agony. It lasted thirty-three years and climaxed at the foot of the cross. She went through that for you.* For you, the crowd laughed at Her, thinking that She was the mother of a madman. For you, the relatives and people of distinction made reproaches to Her. For you, I seemed to disavow Her when I said: 'My Mother and brethren are those who do God's will.' However, no one outdid Her in doing God's will, a formidable Will that imposed on Her the torment of watching Her Son being tortured. For you, She wore Herself out, meeting Me here and there. For you, Her sacrifices: beginning with leaving Her home to mingle with the crowds, going as far as leaving Her native land for the hustle and bustle of Jerusalem. For you, She put up with [Judas], who was brooding treason in his heart. For you, She grieved when I was accused of being a heretic or possessed by the devil. Yes, all that for you. You do not realize how much I loved My Mother. . . . I grieved when I saw My Mother suffering, when I had to lead Her to Her torment like a harmless ewe, and when I had to put Her through so many farewells: the one when I left Nazareth to evangelize; the one I showed you in a vision and which took place before My imminent Passion; the one before the Last Supper when My Passion was already on its way

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with Judas Iscariot's betrayal; and the atrocious farewell on Calvary" (*Poema*, IX, 16-17).

Moreover, Jesus said:

"My Mother's mental sufferings and Mine were *closely related*. They were *meshed together*. They were *intertwined* like lianas in the jungle. Lianas are so tangled up that you cannot separate them to cut them one by one to get through: you must cut them all in one swing of a machete. Or take blood vessels. You cannot deprive only one of them of its blood, because more blood would flow in from the others. Better yet, take a child in the mother's womb. If the mother dies, the child dies too, because what makes him a complete being that can live is the mother's life, warmth and food — pulsing in her bloodstream with every heartbeat and entering the unborn child through his membranes.

". . . You all feel sorry for a mother whose child is destined to die because of an incurable disease, or for a mother whose son is to be put to death by the harshness of human justice. But think about My Mother. *From the moment She conceived Me, She quivered, realizing that I would be the Condemned One*. Think about My Mother. The first time She kissed My tender, pink newborn body, She was aware of My future wounds. Think about My Mother. She would have given Her own life not ten, not a hundred, but a thousand times to prevent Me from becoming an adult and having to be immolated. Think about My Mother. *In order to accept the Lord's will, for His glory, and out of goodness for humanity, She had to desire that dreadful hour She knew about*. I tell you, no other agony has ever lasted that long. No other agony has ever ended in as great a sorrow as My Mother's" (*ibid.*, 20-21).

When Jesus bid Lazarus farewell — five days before His death on the cross — Jesus told him, for one thing:

"My Mother!... Oh! How it grieves Me to talk about Her!... My Mother already is very much anguished. She could even die of exhaustion... *She has been dying for thirty-three years. Now Her whole being is but a wound*. She is like the victim of a horrible torture. I swear to you that I have struggled. I was torn between My mind and My heart, between love and reason, to decide if it was right to keep Her away, to send Her back home. At home, She always thinks about God's Love who made Her a Mother. She can taste the flavour

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of God's fiery Kiss. She rejoices when She remembers that ecstasy. With the eyes of Her soul, She always sees the very air of Her home being stirred by the wings of luminous Angels. The news of My death would reach Galilee not long before I could tell Her: 'Mother, I have overcome!...' *But I can't do it. I cannot! Poor Jesus will bear the sins of the world. I will need comfort, and My Mother will give it to Me.* The world is so wretched that it needs *two victims*. This is because *the man sinned with the woman; so the Woman must redeem as the Man redeems*. Until the hour comes, I keep reassuring My Mother with My smile... She is quaking, I know... She can sense the Torment drawing near. I know. She turns away from it, out of a natural repulsion and a holy love. I look away from death, too, because I am a 'living one' who must die. But woe if She knew that in five days... She would not survive till then. But I want Her alive, to draw My strength from Her lips just as I drew life from Her womb. God wants Her on *My Calvary to mingle the water of Her virginal tears with the wine of Divine Blood, and to celebrate the first Mass*. Do you know what the Mass will be? No, you don't. There is no way you could have known. It will be My death, forever applied to the human race, whether alive or in purgatory.[92] Don't weep, Lazarus. She is strong. She does not weep. She wept all Her life as a Mother. Now She does not weep anymore. She has crucified Her smile on Her face... Did you notice what Her face looks like these days? She has crucified Her smile on Her face to comfort Me. I ask you to imitate My Mother" (*Poema*, IX, 36-37).

"I am the Redeemer." [Jesus is still speaking with Lazarus.] "The Redeemer must consummate His sacrifice and crown it with the supreme immolation . . . . *I am already dead. I have been killed not by some torture, but by lack of love, even before My actual torture* . . . . I am the Lamb. Consciously, I am bidding My farewell to life, to My Mother, to My friends..." (*ibid.*, 40-41).

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92. Mass, as defined by the Council of Trent, is a Sacrifice. It was instituted so that

[1.] "that bloody sacrifice once to be completed on the cross might be represented.

[2.] "and the memory of it remain even to the end of the world [1 Cor. 11:23ff]

[3.] "and its saving grace be applied to the remission of those sins which we daily commit. . . . Not only . . . the sins of the faithful living . . . but also [of] the dead in Christ not yet fully purged."

(Session XXII, chapters 1 & 2. See Denzinger-Schönmetzer, #1740 & 1743. English Translation: Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*. London, Herder, c1957. #938 & 940, p. 288-290).

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At this point, our Seer cannot refrain from writing a note:

"I have suffered much during the whole night, from 11 P.M. on Thursday, March 1 till 5 A.M. on Friday. I saw Jesus. *Especially when He talked about His Mother* and His betrayer, and when He showed how repulsive death was to Him, He was almost as distressed as at Gethsemane" (*ibid.*, 42).

When they walked from Bethany to Jerusalem, Jesus commanded His Apostles not to tell His Mother what He told them about His imminent Passion and most atrocious death.

"It would grieve Me too much," [He says]. "Out of compassion, someone condemned to death is given a drink that stuns him. In this way, he can wait for his torture without being afraid every second that goes by. If you don't say anything to the Redeemer's Mother, it will be like giving Her that compassionate drink. . ." (*Poema*, IX, 56).

Later He told the Apostles:

"There is Zion, out there. Go get the she-ass and her foal. Tell the man: 'We need them for Jesus the Rabbi.' Then tell My Mother I am coming." [She had gone ahead with the women disciples]. "She is on the escarpment with My aunt Mary and Mary of Magdala. She is waiting for Me. This is going to be My human triumph. . . Let it be Hers, too. We must always be united. Yes! United!. . . Who has such a hyena's heart that he will strike with his claws and tear Me out of My Mother's heart? Me, the Heart of Her heart? Could he be a man? No! Every man is born of a woman. His instincts and moral reflexes prevent him from striking at a mother: he remembers his own. It can't be a man. Who then? A demon. But can a demon strike the Victorious Woman? He would have to touch Her to wound Her, but Satan cannot stand the virginal light of God's Rose. Well then, who do you say is the one with a hyena's heart?. . . You won't speak? I will say it then. The most astute demon has united with the most corrupt man and is now enclosed in him. This demon is like venom in the asp's fangs. In this man the devil can draw near the Woman and bite Her treacherously. . . A curse on this hybrid monster of Satan and man! But am I the One cursing him? No. That is

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not the way the Redeemer speaks . . . . No one has greater love than I do!" (*ibid.*, 60-61).

The Apostles are frightened. They wonder who Jesus is talking about. Judas, so as to divert suspicion, craftily mentions various people, alleging that they are Jesus' false friends. At this point of her vision, Valtorta notices that

> Jesus is not even listening [to Judas]. He has walked ahead and catches up to His Mother, who is accompanied by His aunt and Mary of Magdala, Martha and Susannah. . . (*ibid.*, 61).

Meanwhile the crowd, warned of Jesus' arrival, has cut palms and olive boughs, to prepare a great celebration. Jesus orders the women to go to Jerusalem.

> "My Son!. . . You go alone? I can't stay at Your side?" Mary has lifted Her sad face and stares at Her sweet Son with Her sky-blue eyes.
>
> "Please remain hidden as the dove in a rock cleft,"[93] [He replies]. "My dear, beloved Mother, what I need more than Your presence is Your prayers."
>
> "If that is the case, My Son, we will pray. All of us. For You" (*Poema*, IX, 62-63).

Taking leave of His Mother, Jesus sends Her ahead with the women disciples to Lazarus' house on the hill of Zion. From there, they would have a good view of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (*ibid.*, 63).

Jesus is riding among the crowd's enthusiastic hosannas. When He reaches a street going up Mount Moriyyah to the Temple, He sees the house that Mary and the Pious Women are in. Jesus smiles at His Mother and continues. . . (*ibid.*, 73). Upon entering the Temple, He drives out the desecrators. He then brings His Apostles to the Galileans' Field, which is on the Mount of Olives, near Bethany.

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93. An allusion is being made to Canticle of Canticles 2:14. [Editor.]

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On the following day — it was a Monday — Jesus went to the city early in the morning. He entered the house on the hill of Zion where His Mother was. He told Her of young Anna-Leah's death that occurred during His Entrance.

"She died out of the joy of love. I was told when I was on the Ascent to the Temple. Come with Me, Mother . . . to comfort a mother who is holding in her arms her daughter who died of supernatural joy. *Our* first virgin! The one who went to Your house in Nazareth to see Me and ask of Me this joy. . . ." (*ibid.*, 87).

They go to Anna-Leah's mother's house and try to comfort her. She turns to Mary, however, and tells her, for one thing:

"You don't know how much I'm suffering. You're enjoying your Son's triumph, and He's strong and healthy at Your side! Why didn't He come back? What did she do? What did I do to displease Him, since He wasn't moved by my prayer?"

[Mary replies to her:] "Eliza! Eliza! Don't say that. . . Grief is making you deaf and blind. . . Eliza, you have no idea how much *I* suffer. You don't know that My suffering will be a deep ocean. You saw Anna-Leah die peacefully. She was sweet and beautiful in death. She died in your arms. But I. . . *I have been contemplating My Child for over 30 years. I see beyond the smooth, pure flesh that I caress and contemplate: I can see the wounds of the Man of Sorrows that He is to be.* You say I don't know what it's like to see a child die twice, or to see a daughter die and enter her peace. But you, do you know what it is like for a mother to picture such a violent death for so many years? Here is My Son, already dressed in red! He looks as if He just came out of a tub of blood.[94] Soon, even before your child's face darkens in the grave, I will see My Son wearing the purple of His innocent blood. He will be covered with the blood I gave Him. You were able to hold your daughter on your heart. But can you imagine how much I will suffer when I see my Son die like a robber on a cross? Look at Him, the Saviour of all! Saviour of the spirit and of the flesh, because the body of those He will save will

94. Mary's allegory was based on fact. Jesus was still wearing the coat of purple that He had worn on Palm Sunday. [Editor.]

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remain intact and happy in His Kingdom. Look at Me! Look at Me, a Mother who is going to accompany and take Her Son to His sacrifice! *Oh! I will always follow close on His heels!* I understand you, poor mother. But you too, try to understand My heart! Don't hate My Son. It would have been too much for Anna-Leah to see her Lord agonize, so He chose a joyful time to make her happy."

Hearing this revelation, Eliza has stopped weeping. She looks at Mary: quiet tears have streaked down the Martyr's ashen face. She looks at Jesus, who has been looking at her with pity. . . She slides down at Christ's feet and moans . . . .

[Jesus encourages her, telling her, for one thing:] "Anna-Leah lives eternally because she believed in the Life . . . . Your suffering makes you deaf and blind. My Mother put it well. Soon you will repeat the words that I sent you this morning: 'Truly, her death was a grace from God.' Believe Me, woman. . ." (*Poema*, IX, 89-91).

Jesus parts from Eliza and asks His Mother to follow Him. Mary, however, would rather stay with this desolate mother to comfort her. Jesus agrees (*ibid.*, 92).

Mary met with Her Son on the Wednesday before the Passover. She found Him sleeping on the grass. He was having a restless dream. She let Him sleep, watching over Him lovingly. Suddenly,

something breaks Mary's heart. She hears Jesus weep in His sleep and utter Judas' name. . . (*ibid.*, 140).

Some time later, Jesus

wakes up with a start, as if to run away from something horrible. . . But He finds His Mother's chest, Her arms, Her smile, Her sweet voice, Her kisses and caresses . . . .

Jesus smiles at Her and says: "You are always the Mother Who comforts Me and makes up for everything. Dear Mother!" At that, He has Her sit close to Him . . . .

They talk. At one point He asks Her:

"Mother, when You are alone, where will You live?"

"Wherever You say, My Son. I have obeyed You before having You, Son. I will obey You when You are gone." Her voice quavers, but She has a heroic smile on Her lips.

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"You know how to obey. How restful it is to be with You! Can you see why, Mother? The world cannot understand, but I find all My rest when I am with those who obey... Yes. God takes His rest at their side. God would not have had to suffer, to tire Himself out, if disobedience had not come into the world. *All this is happening because of disobedience. That is why there is suffering in the world... That is why both of Us have to suffer.*"

"Yes, but We are also at peace, Jesus. We know that Our obedience comforts the Eternal One. Oh! for Me especially, what a meaningful thought! I, a creature, have been allowed to comfort My Creator!"

"Oh! God's joy! Don't You know, O Our joy, what these words of Yours mean to Us? They outdo the harmonies of the heavenly choirs... You are blessed! Blessed are You to teach Me ultimate obedience and make it even dearer to do."

"You don't need Me to teach You, My Jesus. I learnt everything from You" (*Poema,* IX, 141-142).

Shortly afterwards, Jesus speaks with the women disciples. When He sends them away, He keeps His Mother with Him.

"I will be over at Lazarus' palace[95] before the evening comes," [He says to Her]. "I need to see You again. John will be with Me. But I don't want to see anybody except You, Mother, and aunt Mary, and Martha, Mary of Magdala, and Susannah. I am so tired..." (*ibid.,* 145).

At that, Mary left.

On the Thursday before Passover, just before the Last Supper, Jesus bid farewell to His Holy Mother. She was in a room, in the Eucharistic House,[96] with Mary of Mag-

95. Lazarus' palace was situated on the hill of Zion.

96. By "Eucharistic House," I mean the house that contained what I would call the "Eucharist Room," traditionally called "the Upper Room." The reason for new names is that according to Maria Valtorta's visions, the "Upper" Room was actually down a few steps from ground level. On the other hand, Tradition must have had good reason for calling such a room the Upper Room. After all, the Greek word which is used in St. Luke's gospel to designate this room does mean "Upper Room." Perhaps it is legitimate to conjecture that it was called the "Upper Room" *for a spiritual reason:* it

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dala and Mary of Alpheus. These two retired as soon as Jesus arrived.

Jesus embraces His Mother and kisses Her on the forehead. Mary kisses Her Son's hand and His right cheek. Jesus takes Mary to two stools standing side by side, and with one hand, helps Her down. He keeps holding Her hand once She is sitting.

Jesus remains pensive and sad although He is trying to smile. Mary, anguished, looks at His face. Poor Mother! Grace and love give Her to understand what hour this is! Her face contracts with grief and Her eyes open wide as She sees a distressing inner vision. But She does not make a scene. She remains as majestic as Her Son.

Jesus now begins to talk to Mary. He bids Her farewell and asks Her to pray for Him.

"Mother, I have come to You for strength and comfort. Mother, I am like a little child who needs his mother's heart because he is hurting, who needs his mother's bosom because he needs strength. I'm Your little Jesus again, like a long time ago. I'm not the Master anymore, Mother. I'm just Your Son, as when I was a little boy in Nazareth and until I left My private life. All I have left is You. Right now, Your Jesus has no friends. Nobody is faithful. Nobody is courageous in doing good. Only the wicked are constant and strong in doing evil. But *You* are faithful to Me, Mother. You are My strength in this hour. Support Me with Your love and Your prayer. Of all those who love Me more or less, You are the only one now who can pray and understand. The others are rejoicing. They are planning either a celebration or a crime, while I am suffering on account of so many things. As for My followers, many things will die after today, including their humanity. Then they will be worthy of Me, except the one that damned himself and that nothing can bring to repentance. As for now, they are slow witted men who cannot think about My death. They are rejoicing! They think My triumph is closer than ever. The hosannas from a few days ago exalted them. Mother, *I came for this hour.* I am supernaturally glad to see it come. At the same time, in the bottom of My heart, I am afraid of it. The name of that cup is betrayal, denial, ferociousness, blasphemy, abandon-

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would be "the room above all rooms," since Jesus instituted the Eucharist in it. Alternatively, the "Upper Room" could have simply been the room with the highest ceiling in that house. [Translator.]

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ment. Give Me Your support, Mother. Your prayer drew God's Spirit on You, and through the Spirit, You gave the world the One the nations were waiting for. Now draw upon Me, Your Son, the strength that will help Me to do the work I came for. Mother, farewell. Bless Me, Mother. You can even bless Me in the Father's name. Forgive everyone. Let us forgive those who torture Us. Let us forgive them right now, together."

While He was speaking, Jesus slid down to His knees at His Mother's feet. He is now looking at Her, holding Her by the waist.

Mary weeps silently. Her face is slightly turned upwards as She prays to God inwardly. Tears roll down on Her pale cheeks and fall on Her chest and on Jesus' head. In the end, Jesus leans His head on Her heart. Mary puts Her hand on His head as if to bless Him. She bows to kiss His hair and caress it. She caresses His shoulders and His arms, takes His face in Her hands and turns it towards Her and presses it on Her heart. She is still weeping, and kisses Him again and again on the forehead, the cheeks, and the eyes — His sorrowful eyes. She rocks His poor, weary head, as if it were a child. She rocks His head just as She had rocked the divine newborn Child in the cave, but She is not singing this time. All She says is: "Son! Son! Jesus! My Jesus!" in a voice that rents my heart.

Jesus stands up. He straightens out His coat and remains standing in front of His Mother. She is still weeping. He now blesses Her, and walks to the door. Before walking out, He says to Her: "Mother, I'll come again before I eat My Passover. Pray and wait for Me." At that, He walks out. (*Poema*, IX, 191-192).[97]

The sufferings of Maundy Thursday are beginning.

After instituting the Eucharist and distributing it to His Apostles, Jesus took a piece of consecrated Bread and the chalice of consecrated Wine, and stepped out of the Eucharist Room. He went to His Mother to give Her Communion. He returned to the Eucharist Room with the empty chalice in His hands (*Poema*, IX, 213-214). He said:

97. Maria Valtorta's *Quaderni* contain the following words. (Mary speaking.) "Before the Last Supper, Jesus came to His dear Mother to be comforted. He rested on My heart as when He was little. He wanted to be saturated with My motherly love so that He could stand up to the hatred of so many" (*Quad. '43*, p.636 [Dec. 8]).

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"I have *told* you everything, and *given* you everything" (*ibid.*, 214).

In His discourse to the Apostles after the Last Supper, Jesus recommends His Mother to them:

"Think about My Mother. . . She will not be able to come where I am going. Yet, I left My Father to come to Her and to become Jesus in Her spotless womb. And She is the Inviolate One I came from during the luminous ecstasy of My birth. *Her love became milk and nourished Me.* I am made of purity and love, because Mary fed Me Her virginity which was made fertile by the perfect Love that lives in Heaven. I also grew up thanks to Her. I cost Her tears and fatigue. . . And I am still asking Her to be heroic as no one ever has been. Compared with Her, heroic women like Judith and Jahel are poor women fighting with other women by the local well. Nobody loves Me as much as She does. Despite that, I am leaving Her behind, and for a long time She will not come where I am going. She does not need to be given this commandment I am giving to you: 'Sanctify yourselves year after year, as months, days, and hours go by, so that you can come to Me when your hour comes.' She is filled with every grace and holiness. *She is the creature who received everything and gave everything.* There is nothing to add, nothing to take away. She is the holiest testimony of what God can do" (*Poema*, IX, 219).

One of the reflections Jesus made on the Last Supper is about the power of Mary's intercession. Jesus says:

"I was God made flesh. My 'flesh,' so as to remain spotless, controlled the flesh. That is how spiritually strong it was. Yet I did not refuse the help of the Full of Grace. On the contrary, I asked for it. True, at the hour of expiation, She too would find Heaven closed above Her head. However, it would not be completely shut so as to prevent Her, the Queen of Angels, from obtaining one Angel to comfort Her Son. Oh! She would not get an Angel for Herself, poor Mother! She, too, tasted the Father's bitter abandonment. By Her suffering offered for the Redemption of humanity, She obtained for Me the strength to overcome the Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane and to undergo the Passion in its harshest forms. Each of these forms was destined to wash clean one kind of sin and the means to commit it" (*ibid.*, 232).

In another reflection, Jesus said:

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"You cannot imagine how it affected Me to . . . have to share the ritual cup with Judas [the traitor], and put My lips where he had put his, and to have My Mother do the same (*ibid*, 233).

Jesus went to Gethsemane and His terrible agony began. At one point, He saw a few flowers growing in a crag of the rock He was resting His arms on. They looked like small lilies and reminded Him of His dear Mother.

He speaks to them. "You are pure!. . . You comfort Me! In My Mother's little grotto, there were some little flowers like this. . . and She liked them. She would say: 'When I was little, My father used to say, You're a little lily, filled to the brim with heavenly dew!'. . . My dear Mother! Oh! Mother!" He bursts into tears. I can see and hear Him weeping. His head is resting on His clasped hands, and He is nearly sitting on His heels. He is wringing His hands and twisting His fingers. I hear Him say: "In Bethlehem too. . . and I brought them to You, Mother. But who will ever give You these?. . ."

Then He begins to pray and meditate again . . . . He is gesturing towards Jerusalem. Again He lifts His arms up to Heaven as though asking for help. He takes His coat off as if He was too warm. He looks at it. . . but what can He see? His eyes can see nothing but His torture, and everything increases His torment. Even His coat, woven by His Mother. He kisses it and says: "Sorry, Mother! Sorry!" He seems to say it to the very fabric that His loving Mother spun and wove. He puts it on again. He is in great torment. . . (*Poema*, IX, 248-249).

Jesus moans, with the sighs and rattles of a dying man. "No!. . . Nothing!. . . Go away! The Father's will! That's all!. . . My only Lord is the Most Holy God. My only Law is obedience. My only Love is Redemption. . . No, I don't have a Mother anymore! I don't have a life ahead of Me. . . You're tempting Me in vain, devil, with My Mother, My life. . . My mother is humanity, and I love her so much that I will die for her. . ." (*ibid.*, 251).

Soon afterwards, Jesus is arrested. He undergoes various trials and is, in the end, condemned to the cross.

Judas' encounter with Mary after Her Son was condemned is tragic. He is walking about, highly agitated,

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out of his mind, shouting "Blood! Blood!" from time to time. He stops in front of the Eucharistic House.

The house is shut up, as though it were abandoned. Judas stops and looks at it. "His Mother!" he whispers. "His Mother!. . ." He is uncertain. . . "I have a mother too! And I killed a mother's son!. . . But. . . I want to go in to see that room. There's no blood there. . ." He bangs at the door once. Once more. And again. The lady of the house opens the door just a little, just a crack. . . When she sees this shattered, unrecognizable man, she shrieks and tries to close the door. Judas shoulders it wide open, knocks down the terrified woman and goes on.

He runs to the little door that leads into the Eucharist Room. He opens it and goes in. . . . Judas walks to the table. He looks for wine in the amphora. There is some. He lifts the amphora with both hands and drinks greedily. . . . He stands up. He looks possessed. Now the cup fascinates him. Some red wine is left in the bottom. The wine sparkles because of a sunbeam falling on the metal (which seems to be silver). "Blood! Blood! Here too! His Blood! His Blood!. . . 'Do this in memory of Me!. . . Take and drink. This is My Blood. . . The Blood of the New Testament that will be shed for you. . .' Ah! I'm damned! That Blood can't be shed for the remission of *my* sin. I won't ask for forgiveness because He can't forgive me. I have to go! The Cain that killed God can't find rest anywhere. Die! Die!. . ."

He walks out. He comes face to face with Mary. She is standing at the door of the room where Jesus had left Her. She heard something and came out, hoping to see John, perhaps, who has been gone for several hours. She is pale as a corpse. Suffering makes Her eyes look even more like Her Son's. Judas meets Her glance. Mary is looking at him with the same expression Jesus had when He met Judas on the road: a pleading, grieving, fully aware expression. Judas is frightened. He says: "Oh!" and leans against the wall.

"Judas!" Mary says. "Judas, what have you come to do?" The same words as Jesus. She speaks them lovingly and sorrowfully. Judas recognizes the words and howls.

"Judas." Mary's voice is a quavering caress. "What have you done? Have you responded to so much love with betrayal?"

Judas runs away. Mary calls him in a voice that should have converted a demon. "Judas! Judas! Stop! Stop! Listen! I tell you in His name: repent, Judas. He forgives. . ." But Judas is gone. Mary's voice

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and attitude have been Judas' finishing stroke, because he resisted Her grace.

He is running at top speed. He meets John who is running to the house to get Mary. Jesus has been sentenced and is about to leave for Calvary. It is high time for the Mother to be brought to Her Son. John recognizes Judas, even though there is nothing left of his recent handsome countenance. "You here?" John says to him with obvious disgust. "You here? A curse on you, you murderer of the Son of God! The Master's been sentenced. Gloat if you dare, but get out of my way. I'm going to get the Mother, your other victim. I don't want Her to meet you, you low life."

Judas runs away. He has wrapped his head with the shreds of his coat. He has left no more than a slit for his eyes. The few people who are not at Pilate's palace avoid Judas as if he were a madman. That is exactly what he looks like..." [At that, Judas went and hanged himself] (*Poema,* IX, 297-298).

Jesus says: ". . . had he thrown himself at My Mother's feet, saying: 'Mercy!' She, the merciful Woman, would have sheltered him like a wounded man. She would have shed Her saving tears on his satanic wounds, through which the Enemy had implanted the Crime. She would have held him by the hand to prevent Satan from snatching him and the disciples from hitting him. She would have brought him to the foot of the cross for My Blood to fall on him first, since he was the worst sinner who ever lived. She would have been an admirable Priestess at Her altar, standing between Purity [Christ] and sin [Judas]. Yes, She is not only the Mother of virgins and saints, but also of sinners. But Judas did not want to..." (*ibid.*, 303-304)

It was about 10:30 A.M. on Good Friday when John the Apostle came to get Mary. Having entered the Eucharist Room,

he falls on his knees against the bench on which Jesus had been. He weeps, calling Him sorrowfully. . . . "Oh! God Most High, help me! Help me to tell His Mother! I don't have the heart to!... But *I have to tell Her. I have to,* because I am the only one that didn't run away!" (*Poema,* IX, 317).

Then, with an incredible effort, he goes to Mary's room and opens the door... He is standing in front of Her...

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With a river of tears, he humbly begs Her forgiveness for falling asleep when Jesus expected some comfort during their vigil and for fleeing when He was arrested. . . The Blessed Virgin asks him:

". . .Where is My Son?"

"Mother. . . I. . . Mother, He is. . . Mother. . ."

"He has been sentenced, I know. I mean where is He now?"

"I did everything I could so He could see me. I looked for someone in high places who might have mercy, someone who might arrange for Him to suffer less. They didn't hurt Him too much. . ."

"Don't lie, John. Not even out of pity for a mother. You could not do it. It would be useless. *I know. I have been following Him in His sufferings since last night.* You cannot see this, but My body has been bruised by His whipping, I have His thorns on My forehead, I felt the blows. . . everything. But now. . . I cannot see anything. I do not know where My Son is, now that He has been sentenced to the cross!. . . to the cross!. . . *to the cross!*. . . Oh! God, give Me strength! He *must* see Me. I *must not* feel My own pain as long as He feels His. When everything is. . . over, then let Me die, o God, if that is Your will. But for His sake, not now. Let Him see Me. . . Let us go, John. Where is Jesus?"

"He is leaving Pilate's house. That hubbub is the crowd shouting around Him. He's tied, waiting for the cross on the steps of Pilate's palace, or else He is already on His way to Golgotha."

"John, go tell your mother and the other women. Then we will go. Take this cup, this bread, these pieces of linen. . . Put them here. They will comfort us. . . later. . . Let us go."

John picks those objects off the floor and goes out to call the women. Mary waits for him. She brushes the pieces of linen on Her face, as though She was trying to find Her Son's hand's caresses. She kisses the cup and the bread, and puts everything on a shelf. Then She wraps Herself tightly in Her coat, pulling it down to Her eyes over the veil that covers Her head, and wrapping it around Her neck. She is not crying but She is trembling. She seems to be short of breath, since She is gasping with Her mouth open. John walks in with the women in tears behind him.

"My daughters! Be quiet! Help me not to cry! Let us go!" At this, She leans on John who guides Her and gives Her support as if She were blind (*ibid.*, 319-320).

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On the way to Calvary, Mary, John and the pious women meet Jesus.

He cries: "Mother!" Since the beginning of His torments, that is the first word He says that betrays His suffering . . . .

Mary staggers a little and puts Her hand on Her heart as if She has been stabbed. Controlling Herself, She walks faster towards Her wounded Son, with Her arms outstretched. She cries out "Son!" in such a voice that only someone with a hyena's heart would not be heartbroken by such grief. . . .

Mary cannot embrace Her Child... She holds back since even the lightest caress would torture His wounded body. . . . Two anguished souls kiss one another, that is all... (*Poema,* IX, 336-337).

Meanwhile, a large crowd was scoffing at Jesus' Mother. Braving the insults of the crowd of "cannibals," She then takes a short-cut to the hilltop, where a roaring mob is assembled. Longinus orders the troops to evacuate them.

The executioners get their tools ready and finish emptying the holes. Meanwhile, the condemned wait in the middle of the square, and the judges, kitty-corner from Mary and the other women, insult the condemned. They even insult Jesus' Mother. "Death to the Galileans! Death to the Galileans! Damned Galileans! Death to the Galilean blasphemer. Nail to the cross the Womb-that-bore-Him, too! Away with the vipers that beget demons! Let Her die! Weed Israel from women united with the devil!..."

Longinus has come off his horse. He turns round and sees the Mother... He gives orders to stop all that racket . . . .

Everything is ready on the hilltop. The condemned are called up. Jesus, once again, walks by His Mother. She moans and tries to muffle Her voice, covering Her mouth with Her coat. The judges, seeing that, laugh and poke fun.

John, the meek John, who has an arm around Mary's shoulders to steady Her, turns round with a fierce look. His eyes seem almost phosphorescent. If he did not have to protect the women, I think that he would grab one of those cowards by the throat.

As soon as the condemned have walked up to the deadly platform,

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soldiers encompass the little square on three sides. No one goes on the fourth side since it is an overhang.

The centurion orders the man from Cyrene to go away. He leaves reluctantly. I would say that he does this out of love, not cruelty. This must be the case since he joins the Galileans and, together with them, puts up with the insults that the crowd lavishes on these few people who remain faithful to Christ.

The two thieves blaspheme as they throw their crosses on the ground. Jesus remains quiet.

This is the end of the Way of the Cross (*Poema*, IX, 340).

The Crucifixion

Four muscular men walk up the path towards the crucifixion site. Judging by their faces, they are probably Jews. They seem to deserve the cross more than the condemned men, and appear to belong to the same social class as the scourgers. These men are wearing short, sleeveless tunics. Carrying nails, hammers and ropes to the site, they show them to the condemned and jest about it. The crowd is delirious, reeling with cruelty.

The Roman centurion offers Jesus an amphora to drink an anesthetic mixture of wine and myrrh, but Jesus does not want any. The two thieves, however, gulp down a great deal of it . . . .

The condemned are ordered to take off their clothes. The two thieves strip shamelessly . . . .

The executioners hand the condemned rags to wrap around their loins. As the thieves take theirs, they blaspheme and curse horribly. Jesus removes His clothing slowly because of His painful wounds. He does not want a rag. Possibly, He thinks that He will be allowed to wear His undergarment, which He wore even when He was scourged. Jesus is ordered to take it off. He holds out His hand to get a rag to cover His loins. He is really the Annihilated One: He had to beg such scoundrels for a rag to cover His nakedness.

Mary has noticed. She takes off Her fine, long, white veil from beneath Her dark coat. Many tears have already been shed upon that veil. Without removing Her coat, Mary hands the veil to John who gives it to Longinus for Her Son. The centurion makes no objections and sees that Jesus is about to take off His undergarment, having turned His back to the crowd and facing the cliff. Seeing Jesus'

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bare back — bruised, blistered, covered with blood, with open wounds and black scabs everywhere — Longinus gives Jesus His Mother's linen veil. Jesus recognizes it. He wraps the veil several times around His hips making sure that it will not fall. . . Until now, only teardrops had fallen onto the linen. Now blood drops mingle with them. Jesus' wounds, which were barely beginning to heal, reopened when He bent down to take His sandals off and put His clothes on the ground. . . .[98]

The crowd laughs and jeers at Jesus. Speaking as a chorus, they say: "Oh! How handsome He is! The most handsome of the children of men! The daughters of Jerusalem adore You. . ." . . . They laugh and shout. . . "Oh! Oh! The Perfect One! You, the Son of God? Not at all! You're Satan's puny child! Mammon, at least, is strong and powerful. But You're a useless, disgusting rag."

The thieves are tied to their crosses and laid down on either side of where Jesus will be, like this: | + |. They scream, swear, and curse . . . .

It is Jesus' turn. He willingly lays down on the wood. Before Him, the two thieves struggled so wildly that the four executioners could not handle them and asked the soldiers for help. These prevented the thieves from kicking the executioners off as they tried to tie their wrists.

They do not need any help with Jesus. He lays down and puts His head exactly where they tell Him to. He opens His arms and stretches His legs as He is told. Only, He adjusts His Mother's veil around His waist.

Jesus' long, slender, pale body stands out against the dark wood and yellowish ground. Two executioners sit on His chest to hold Him down. . . Another man grabs Jesus' right arm and holds His lower forearm with one hand and His fingertips with his other hand. The fourth executioner holds the long, sharp nail. It has a square stem and a round flat head as big as a large coin from days gone by. A hole has already been made in the wood and the executioner checks to see if it corresponds with the distal radio-ulnar joint. It does. The

98. In the *Quaderni*, Jesus says: "How terribly sorrowful My Mother was! Both when I was born and when I died, She was unable to give Her Child the comfort that even the most miserable of the sons of man get when they are born and when they die. Both times, She had to use Her veil: to make some clothing for Her newborn Child, and to make a loin cloth for Her Son Who was to shed all His blood" (*Quad.* '43, p.350 [Sept. 14]).

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executioner rests the tip of the nail on Jesus' wrist, lifts his hammer, and strikes the first blow.

The pain is excruciating. Jesus tenses His muscles and lets out a scream. His eyes were closed; He now opens them wide; they overflow with tears. The pain must be unbearable. . . As the nail goes in, it cuts through muscles, veins and nerves, and crushes the bones. . .

Mary hears the cry of Her tortured Child. She moans like a wailing lamb being led to the slaughter. She bends over as if She were broken, holding Her head with both hands. Jesus stops screaming so as not to grieve His Mother, [but She can still hear] the steady, brutal blows of iron hitting iron. . . To think that a living limb is receiving those blows. . .

Once Jesus' right hand has been nailed, they turn to the left hand. The hole is not found to be under His wrist. The executioners take a rope, tie His left wrist and begin pulling. They dislocate His joint, tear the tendons and muscles, and lacerate the skin already torn by the ropes used when Jesus was arrested. His other hand also must be in pain: as they pull tightly on the rope, the nail hole is enlarged. Even after all this pulling, they are still short of the wrist. The hole barely reaches the end of the metacarpus near the wrist. They give up and put a nail where they can, in the space between the [base of the] thumb and the other fingers, right in the middle of the metacarpus. The nail goes in more easily, but it is more painful. Cutting through important nerves, it causes Jesus' fingers on that hand to turn lifeless.[99] In contrast, the fingers on His other hand tense up and tremble.[100] Jesus no longer screams. His lips are shut tight as He moans hoarsely. He weeps in pain and His tears roll on the wood and down to the ground.

The executioners begin to work on His feet. About seven feet from the bottom of the cross is a wedge. It is barely large enough for one foot. They place Jesus' feet on it to see if the measurement is correct. It is too low and His feet do not fit properly, so they stretch the poor Martyr by the ankles. The rough wood of the cross rubs against Jesus' wounds and pushes against His crown of thorns.

99. The nail went in the left hand at the very place where the median nerve branches off. [Editor.]

100. The nail in the right wrist missed the median nerve, since it went through the radio-ulnar joint. [Editor.]

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As the crown moves, it pulls more hair and nearly falls off Jesus' head. An executioner taps it back into place. . .

The two men on Jesus' chest stand up, but immediately sit on His knees, because when He saw the next nail glistening in the sun, He involuntarily withdrew His legs. The nail is twice as long and twice as large as those used for His hands. The men's weight crushes His grazed knees and His poor bruised tibias.

The other two men are trying to nail one foot over the other. They find it more difficult than nailing His hands, because the tarsal joints have to be aligned. Although they carefully watch the feet and hold them by the ankles and the toes to steady them on the wedge, the bottom foot [the left one] moves because of the vibrations from the hammer blows. They are almost forced to remove the nail, because it entered the soft part of the [left] foot when it came out of the right one. They now put it closer to the center and keep hammering. . . The horrible noise of the hammer hitting the nail fills Calvary. The crowd is utterly quiet, straining their eyes and ears to see, hear, and enjoy everything. . .

Above the bitter metallic sound is heard a low, dovelike moan. Mary wails hoarsely under Her breath. She bends further forward with each blow, as if the hammer was causing Her to sag. It is no wonder that the martyred Mother seems to be on the verge of being destroyed by witnessing this torture. Crucifixions are terrible. The pain is about the same as a scourging, but they are more horrible to watch, because one can see a nail disappearing into living flesh. Thankfully, a crucifixion does not last as long as a scourging. Scourgings are exhausting to watch because they last so long. . .

As the executioners drag the cross towards the hole, it bounces on the uneven ground and shakes poor Jesus. While the cross is raised, they drop it twice. The first time, the cross falls back suddenly. The second time, its right arm hits the ground. These jolts send a sharp pain through Jesus' body, because the sudden jars pull on His wounded members. When at last the cross is dropped into its hole, it sways unsteadily in all directions shaking Jesus' poor body continually. Jesus is fastened to the cross only by three nails, which causes Him to suffer horribly as long as the cross has not been steadied with dirt and stones.

All of Jesus' body weight shifts forward and downward. The nail holes enlarge, especially in His left hand. The blood spurts out of the stretched hole in His feet. The blood runs along His toes and

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drips onto the ground and along the wood of the cross. The blood from Jesus' hands runs along His forearms, because His wrists hang higher than His armpits . . . . The blood streaks down His chest on its way down to His waist. The cross still sways somewhat, causing the crown [of thorns] to shift. As Jesus' head is swayed back, the thorns move back too. This drives the big thorny knot that holds the crown of thorns together into the nape of Jesus' neck. Then it moves back onto His forehead, scratching and clawing it mercilessly.

Finally the cross is stabilized. Jesus' torment now consists only of being attached to a cross. The thieves's crosses are set into place. Once the thieves hang vertically, they scream as if they were being skinned alive. The ropes cut into their wrists turning their hands black, and their veins puff up and look like cables. Jesus remains still, but the crowd's hellish hubbub begins again . . . .

Looking around, Longinus sees Mary just below the ridge. Her haggard face is lifted towards Her Son. Longinus calls to one of the soldiers playing dice and says to him: "If the Mother wants to come up with Her other son, let Her come. Escort Her and help Her."

Mary walks up with John, who is mistaken for another son. They walk up stairs carved in what I believe is tuff. They cross the cordon of soldiers and get near the foot of the cross. Mary stands a little ways back so that She and Jesus can see one another. Immediately the crowd insults Jesus shamelessly. They include Mary in the blasphemies addressed to Her Son. Mary seeks only to comfort Him with a tormented smile. Her trembling lips turn white. No amount of will power could ever hold back Her tears, which fall and dry on Her lips.

The people, beginning with some Priests, Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians and others, begin to amuse themselves with, so to speak, a merry-go-round. They climb up the steep path, walk along the upper ridge, and then go back down at the other end; or they walk in the opposite direction. As they walk across the top — along the second little square — they do not fail to pay homage to the dying One with their blasphemies. All the depravity, cruelty, hatred and madness that men are capable of with their tongues are sadly exemplified by these hellish mouths. The bitterest among them are the Chief Priests and Pharisees. . . .

A group says with one voice: "Come down from the cross and we'll believe in You. You who destroy the Temple. . . You're insane! Look over there, the glorious, holy Temple of Israel. It's untouchable, You profaner! And You, You're dying."

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Other Priests shout: "Blasphemer! You, the Son of God? Come down then. Strike us down if You're God. We're not scared of You. We spit on You."

Other people go by, shaking their heads. "All He can do is cry. Save Yourself if You're really the Chosen One!"

The soldiers yell: "Come on, save Yourself! Destroy this place of ill repute! Yes! You Jews, you rabble, your land is a disgrace to the Empire. Come on, destroy them! Rome will place You in the Capitol and worship You as a god!"

The Priests and their peers: "Women's arms were softer than the crossbeams, eh? Look: Your (here they say something vile [about the Pious women]) are all here, ready for You. All of Jerusalem will be Your best man." At that, they whistle like uncouth men.

Other onlookers throw stones and shout: "Turn them into bread, You bread-multiplier."

Others mimic the hosannas of Palm Sunday. They throw branches and shout: "Cursed be the one who comes in the devil's name! Cursed be His reign! Glory be to Zion that cuts Him off from the living!"

A Pharisee stands in front of the cross and makes a fist with horns. He says: "Didn't You say: 'I'm entrusting you to the God of Sinai?' Now the God of Sinai is preparing You for eternal fire! Why don't You call Jonah to do You a good turn?"

Another one says: "Don't damage the cross with Your head banging on it. We've got to save it for Your disciples. A legion of them will die on Your wood, I swear it on the Lord's name. I'll crucify Lazarus first. We'll see if You can bring him back from the dead *this* time." . . .

The thief on the left continues to insult Jesus from his cross. He seems to be gathering the others' blasphemies. He repeats them all and says: "Save Yourself and us too if You want us to believe in You. You, the Christ? You're a madman! The world belongs to the shrewd and there's no God. There's only me. That's true. And I can do anything I want. God?. . . A fairy tale invented to keep us quiet. Long live our egos! We alone are kings and gods!"

The thief on the right has Mary close to his feet. He looks at Her almost more than at Christ. He has been weeping for a few minutes, whispering: "His Mother." Then he says [to the thief on the left]: "Shut up! Don't you fear God, even now that you're suffering like this? Why do you insult such a good Man? The torture He's putting up with is a lot worse than ours, and He never did anything wrong."

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The thief on the left keeps on cursing. Jesus remains quiet . . . .

[By now] the Jews have been driven out of the little square. They do not stop insulting Jesus, and the unrepentant thief repeats what they say. The other thief is now looking at the Mother with increasing pity. He weeps and rudely answers [the thief on the left] when he realizes that he is insulting Her also.

"Shut up! Remember you were born of a woman, and our mothers cried because of us. They shed tears of shame. . . because we're crooks. They're dead now. . . I wish I could tell mine I'm sorry. . . Will I ever be able to? She was a holy woman. . .. I killed her with the grief I gave her. . . I'm a sinner. . . Who will forgive me? Mother, in the name of Your dying Son, pray for me!"

The Mother lifts Her tormented face for a moment. She looks at this unfortunate man who is beginning to repent because he remembers his mother and contemplates *the* Mother standing before him. Mary seems to be caressing him with Her dove's eyes.

Dismah weeps out loud. This unleashes the crowd's sarcasms as well as his companion's scoffing. The crowd shouts: "Great! Take Her for a mother. Now She has two sons that are criminals!" The other thief goes on to say: "She loves you because you're aping Her beloved."

Jesus speaks for the first time: "Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing!"

This prayer helps Dismah overcome all his fears. He dares look at Christ and says: "Lord, remember me when You are in Your Kingdom. I am suffering and that's fair, but have mercy on me and give me peace when I die. I heard You speak one day but I was foolish and I despised Your word. Now I repent. I repent of my sins before You, Son of the Most High. I believe that You come from God. I believe in Your power. I believe in Your mercy. Christ, forgive me in the name of Your Mother and Your Most Holy Father."

Jesus turns towards the thief with great pity. He smiles at him, a smile still beautiful and kind on His poor tortured mouth. He says: "I tell you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

The repented thief calms down. He cannot remember any of the prayers that he learned as a child, so he repeats over and over: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, have mercy on me. Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, I hope in You. Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, I believe You are God."

. . . Jesus looks as ghastly as a corpse beginning to decompose. He appears already to be dead. It is a sinister sight. His head begins

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to hang on His chest. His strength is failing Him rapidly. He is shivering despite the fever consuming Him. In His weakness, He whispers the name which until now He has said deep within His heart: "Mother! Mother!" He whispers quietly, as in a sigh, as if a slight delirium prevented Him from holding back what He would like to hold back. Each time Mary hears Her name, She cannot but stretch out Her arms as if to help Her Son.

The cruel mob jeers at the suffering of the dying One and of the Woman of Sorrows . . . .

[By now] the light has turned dusky and frightening. This is when Jesus gives John to Mary, and Mary to John. He bows His head, because His Mother drew under the cross to see Him better. He says: "Woman, this is Your son. Son, this is your Mother."

Mary's face is even more drawn after these words. This is Her Son's testament: He has nothing to give Her but a man. Further, out of love for mankind, He deprives Her of the God-Man born of Her. The poor Mother can no longer suppress Her tears and tries to weep silently at least. . . Even though She tries to hold Her tears back, they brim over. She smiles sorrowfully at Her Jesus, trying to comfort Him. . .

Jesus' suffering increases. The light fails more and more. The [bleak] scene looks as though it were underwater.

Nicodemus and Joseph come from behind the Jews and say: "Get out of the way!"

"You can't go through," the soldiers reply. "What do you want?"

"We want through. We're friends of Christ."

The Chief Priests turn around. They indignantly ask: "Who dare say they're friends of the rebel?"

Joseph, determined, replies: "I, noble member of the great Sanhedrin, Joseph of Arimathea the Elder, and with me, Nicodemus, chief of the Jews."

"Whoever sides with the rebel is a rebel."

"Whoever sides with the murderers is a murderer. . ." . . .

Jesus collapses forward, as far down as He can go. He already looks dead. He no longer gasps for air; His head hangs low, motionless. From the waist up, His body does not touch the cross, and His arms are at an angle with the crossbeams.

Mary shouts: "He is dead!" Her tragic shout reverberates in the darkness. Jesus really seems to be dead.

Actually, He is not yet dead. Soon afterwards,

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by sheer will power welling up from His soul, He overcomes the obstacles of His locked jaws, His swollen tongue, His edematous throat, and shouts in a loud voice: "Elohi, elohi, lamma shebaq-theni!" (That is what I heard.) [It meant: "My God, My God, why have You abandoned Me?"]

Jesus began to die when He first became aware of His Father's abandonment; the same awareness accelerates His death. It is Jesus' final torment. It expels the last blood drops through His pores, and tears the last fibers of His heart. The primary cause of my dear Jesus' death was the Father's abandonment. O God, how You smote Him for us! . . .

It is getting even darker. Jerusalem can no longer be seen. . . .

In the dusk, Jesus says in a plaintive voice: "I am thirsty!" . . .

A soldier . . . soaks the sponge in the jar, fits it on a solid, albeit slender reed which was at hand, and lifts it up to Jesus. Jesus eagerly reaches for the sponge as it comes near Him. He is like a starving child searching for his mother's breast.

Mary sees this and certainly has the same thought. She moans as She leans on John. "Oh! I can't even give Him a single tear... O My breasts, why can't you give milk? O My God, why, why have You abandoned us like this? A miracle for My Child! Since I have no milk, who will lift Me up so I can quench His thirst with My blood?..."

At first, Jesus eagerly sucked the bitter, pungent drink, but now He turns His head away. He finds the drink as disgusting as poison.[101] Besides, the vinegar must have burnt His wounded, split lips. He leans back and collapses. He is letting go.

All His body weight falls back on His feet and forward. The pull reopens the wounds in His extremities, causing horrible pain.

Jesus no longer moves to relieve His pain. From His pelvis upward, His body no longer touches the wood.

. . . More and more time elapses between Jesus' inhalations. His abdomen has already become immobile. Only His thorax continues to move, but painfully and laboriously... Pulmonary paralysis is gradually becoming more pronounced.

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101. It would appear that this passage must be understood spiritually. When Jesus realized that the drink was drugged, He felt strong repulsion because, for our sake, He did not want to lessen His sufferings. Thus He would have felt that the drink was a spiritual poison. [Publisher — Kolbe's.]

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Jesus' voice is weaker. It has become the simple moan of a child, as He calls: "Mother!" The poor Woman whispers: "Yes, My dear, I'm here." Jesus' vision mists over and He says: "Mother, where are You? I can't see You. You too, You abandoned Me?" His words are not even words, but a barely audible whisper. Mary can hear each sigh of Her dying Son with Her heart more than with Her ears. She says: "No, no, My Son! I'm not abandoning You! Listen to Me, My dear. . . Your Mother *is* here. . . My only torment is that I can't go where You are. . ." . . .

All is silent for a while. Then, in total darkness, the clear words "Everything has been accomplished!" are spoken. After this, Jesus' gasps become more guttural, and the periods of silence grow longer in between the death rattles. . . .

Mary of Clopas, Mary of Magdala and Mary Salome cry, with their heads resting on the sloping ground. Their cries are easily heard, because the whole crowd is quiet again to hear every death gasp.

All is again quiet for a while. Then Jesus ardently prays, in an infinitely soft whisper: "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit!"

It is quiet again. Even His death rattle is becoming softer. It is a breath that hardly involves more than the mouth and throat.

Jesus undergoes His death throes. Horrible convulsions run up His body three times from His feet to His head. It looks as though His body is about to pry away from the wood despite the three nails. The convulsions run along His poor tortured nerves, raising His abdomen three times in an abnormal manner, dilating it as if the viscera were upset. Then the convulsions subside and the abdomen falls back in and grows hollow as if it were empty. The convulsions raise the thorax, distending it and contracting it so much that the skin sinks between the ribs that rise underneath the epidermis and reopen the wounds that resulted from the scourging. Each time — three times in all — the convulsions jolt His head back, making it hit the wood hard. All of His face muscles contract in one spasm, emphasizing the torsion on the right side of the mouth. The eyelids open wide, the eyeballs roll, and the white sclera appears. His entire body is stretched tight. The third and final contraction is especially terrible to see. His body looks like a vibrating, tense bow. Then a powerful scream cleaves the air. It is unimaginable that it should come from such a weary body. This is the *great cry* that the Gospels speak about. It is the first syllable of the word *Mother*. . . After that, nothing. . .

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Jesus' head falls down on His chest, and His body lunges forward. There is no more trembling. There is no more breathing. Jesus is dead.

The earth responds to the Victim's shout with a dreadful grumbling . . . .

Immediately after this, a sudden hurricane sweeps the land while lightning streaks the sky and the ground begins to quake . . . .

Longinus, John, and the soldiers grab hold of whatever they can so as not to fall. John holds on to the cross with one arm; with the other he holds Mary, who has taken refuge on his chest because of Her grief and the jolting. The other soldiers, especially those on the side of the cliff, take refuge in the middle to avoid falling down. The terrified thieves howl. The panic-stricken people howl even louder and want to run away but cannot. Some fall on top of each other and take to fighting; others fall into crevices, are wounded or tumble down the hill.

The earthquake is felt three times and there are three violent gusts of air. Then there is absolute silence in a dead world. . . .

Mary raises Her head on John's chest and looks at Her Jesus. She calls His name, because She cannot see Him well in the faint light and with Her poor eyes overflowing with tears. She calls Him three times: "Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!" It is the first time that She calls Him by name since He came to Calvary. At last a flash of lightning traces, as it were, a crown above Golgotha. Mary is able to see Jesus. He is totally motionless and has collapsed forward. His head is leaning forward and to the right so much that His cheek touches His shoulder, and His chin touches His ribs. She understands. She stretches out Her trembling hands in the dark and shouts: "My Son! My Son! My Son!" Then She listens. Her mouth is gaping open, as if She tried to listen with it too. At the same time, Her eyes are wide open to see better... She cannot believe that Her Jesus is dead...

John, too, has looked and listened, and he understands that all is over. He clasps Mary into his arms and tries to take Her away, saying: "He is no longer suffering." Before John was finished speaking, Mary, who has understood also, frees Herself, turns around, bends over the ground, puts Her hands on Her eyes and shouts: "I no longer have a Son!" (*Poema,* IX, 341-363).

The Redemption of the world is accomplished. Humanity is saved. As we have just seen, from the beginning to

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the end of Redemption, Mother and Son were always intimately associated. As John told Mary many years later:

"You died in Your heart, when You saw His horrible torture and His death. You have already suffered everything in order to be Redemptrix with Him" (*Poema,* X, 284).

iii) *The Mode of Mary's Association With Christ*

To complete the explanation of Mary's intimate and indissoluble association with Christ's person and the whole work of humanity's Redemption, we should examine Valtorta's writings, to see what they indicate about the *mode* of that association. Just as Eve was one with Adam in their fall from grace, so Mary (the new Eve) was one with Christ (the new Adam) in redeeming the human race.

This is the so-called principle of "revenge," in which Redemption overturned the fall from grace: "the revenge of God" (*Poema,* I, 35).

Jesus says to His Mother:

"I will take with You My revenge over Satan" (*Poema,* I, 34).[102]

Jesus says: "The pair Jesus/Mary is the antithesis of the pair Adam/Eve. Jesus and Mary were set apart to cancel Adam and Eve's entire work. They were set apart to restore humanity to the state it was in when it was created: rich in grace and all the gifts lavished on it by the Creator. Humanity has been totally regenerated by the work of the pair Jesus/Mary, who have thus become the new Prototypes of humanity. All of time before that has been cancelled. Time and human history now revolve around the time when the new Eve drew the new Adam out of Her inviolate womb. This was a turning-round of creation, thanks to the work of the Lord God.

"After they sinned, Adam and Eve found themselves stripped of the infinite riches that God the Father had bestowed on them. Their

102. This "revenge principle" was taught by Innocent III (P.L.217, 581ff); also by Pius XII and a great number of Popes (see G. Roschini, *Maria SS. nella storia della salvezza* [*Most Holy Mary in the History of Salvation*], vol. I, p.191-196).

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doing caused mortal infirmity, perpetual mutilation and impoverishment, and worse yet, spiritual destitution. In order to annul that work of evil, the new Adam and the new Eve had to systematically counter everything that the old Adam and the old Eve had done. They had to obey to perfection. They had to humble and immolate Themselves in Their flesh, feelings, thinking, and will. They had to do this in order to accept everything that God wanted. They had to raise Their purity to the point of absolute chastity. . . . What was the flesh for Us both, since We were pure? A veil of water over [Our] triumphant spirit[s], a light breeze caressing [Our] royal spirit[s]. . . .

". . . We were filled with love as no one else ever has been. We pushed love to the apex of perfection to fill, with Our ocean of love, the abyss which Adam and Eve dug with their fake love: they loved themselves more than they loved God. . . . Constantly, we had to do the very opposite of Adam and Eve's behavior. . . .

"Mary must cancel Eve. Mary sees the second Cain: Judas. Mary knows that he is the Cain of Her dear Jesus, the second Abel. She knows that the blood of the second Abel was sold by this Cain, and that it is as good as shed. Still, She does not curse him. She loves him and forgives him. She loves him and continuously calls him. . .." (*Poema*, IX, 305-308).

Elsewhere, Jesus says:

". . . Evil entered the world through a woman, and it was vanquished by a Woman. The Fruit of the Woman disintoxicated men from Lucifer's mudslinging. . ." (*Poema*, X, 42).

[Mary is] "the Eve of the new Paradise" (*Poema*, VI, 1109).

The mode of Mary's association as the new Eve with the new Adam, Christ, was foretold in the famous prophecy called the *proto-evangelium* (Gen 3:15).

[Jesus is speaking to His Apostles.] "It has been said that through a Woman, Goodness will come back into the world [just as evil, through a woman, has entered it] and Satan will be vanquished. . . .[103] Since evil entered the world through a woman, it is just that Goodness should reenter it through the Woman. What is at stake here is to cancel a page written by Satan. That is what the

103. This is fitting since he had used a woman, Eve, to overcome and ruin humanity.

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Woman's tears will do. Also, since Satan will forever not stop shouting, the Woman's voice will sing to drown his shouts."

"When?" [the Apostles ask.]

"In truth, I tell you: Her voice has already come down from Heaven, where [from everlasting Her alleluia had already been sung]."

"Will She be greater than Judith?"

"Greater than any other woman."

"What is She going to do? What will She ever do?"

"She will overthrow Eve and her triple sin. She will do that with Her absolute obedience, absolute purity, and absolute humility. After that, She will stand up as a victorious Queen..." (*Poema,* VI, p.855).

Elsewhere the same thought is expressed in equivalent terms.

"The new Eve was conceived {by} the Thought at the foot of the paradisiacal apple-tree in order to put to flight the serpent and detoxicate the poisoned fruit by means of Her smile and Her tears. She became the tree of the redeeming fruit. . . ." (*Poema,* III, 469).

"I overcame Satan both in Myself and in mankind," [the Virgin Mary said to the Seer]. "I have him underfoot" (*Quad. '44,* p.40 [Jan. 10]).

Also in *Lezioni sull'Epistola di Paolo ai Romani* [A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans], we can find a development of the classical antithetical parallel Eve/Mary.

"Two altogether different voices! One from the peaks that stand in pure air and shine in the sun. The other from below, from the earth, from semi-darkness. God's voice is Light, Wisdom, and Truth. Satan's voice is darkness, filth, and lies.

"The *first Eve* lowered her gaze and lent an ear to the voice of darkness, filth and lies. The *second Eve* lent an ear to the voice of Light, Wisdom and Truth. The second Eve is the second Garden of Eden where God has been pleased to talk with an innocent being in the cool of the evening, in the peace of a spirit that does not experience the fever and heat of lust. . . .

"Because the first Eve wanted to be 'like God,' she lost what makes of the human animal a child of God. But You, [Mary,] were not greedy in any way, since You wanted to be *no more than a hand-*

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maid. You became divine[104] as a result of Your betrothal with Divine Love and of Your divine maternity" (*Lezioni sull'Epistola di Paolo ai Romani* [A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans], ch. XVI, p.94-95).

"The human race experienced sin, suffering, and death through a woman's unfaithfulness. Through the faithfulness of *the* Woman, the human race obtained regeneration through grace and, as a result, forgiveness, pure joy, and life" (*ibid.*, p.143).

". . . Eve's sin," [Mary said to Valtorta] "was a four-branched tree: pride, avarice, gluttony and lust." [These four branches produced the fruit of disobedience.] "And all four [branches of Eve's sin] were to be cut off, before making the roots of the tree sterile" (*Poema*, I, 191).

Mary reversed what Eve did by cutting these four branches.

She cut the branch of pride

"*By deeply humiliating Myself*," [Mary says] "*I defeated pride.* I abased Myself before everybody. . . . What humiliation I had to suffer from men, without defending Myself in any way!" (*Poema*, I, 191).

She then alludes to Her humiliations before Joseph the Just.

"They were the first of the infinite humiliations I was to suffer in My life as Mother of Jesus and of mankind. Humiliations of poverty, of a refugée, humiliations for reproaches of relatives and friends who, being unaware of the truth, judged Me a weak woman with regard to My behaviour as a Mother towards Jesus, when He was a young man, humiliations during the three years of His public life, cruel humiliations in the hour of Calvary, humiliation in having to admit that I could not afford to buy a place and the perfumes for the burial of My Son" (*ibid.*, p.192).

104. See note 76 on p.107. [Editor.]

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She cut the branch of greed

"*I overcame the avarice of the First Parents renouncing My Creature before the time.* A mother never renounces her creature unless she is forced to. Whether her heart is asked to renounce her creature by her country or by the love of a spouse or even by God Himself, she will resent and struggle against the separation. It is natural. A son grows in our womb and the tie that links him to us can never be completely broken. . . . And a mother feels [that tie] stretching even to exceedingly severe pangs if the love of God or of a creature or the need of the country take her son away from her. And it breaks, tearing her heart, if death snatches her son from her. And I renounced My Son from the very moment I had Him. I gave Him to God. I gave Him to you. I deprived Myself of the Fruit of My womb to make amends for Eve's theft of God's fruit" (*ibid.*, p.192).

She cut the branch of gluttony

"*I defeated gluttony, both of knowledge and of enjoyment, by agreeing to know only what God wanted Me to know*, without asking Myself or Him more than what I was told. I believed unquestioningly. I overcame the innate personal delight of enjoyment because I denied Myself every sensual pleasure. I confined flesh, the instrument of Satan, together with Satan, under My heel and made of them a step to rise towards Heaven. Heaven! My aim. Where God was. My only hunger. A hunger which is not gluttony, but a necessity blessed by God, Who wants us to crave for Him" (*ibid.*, p.192).

She cut the branch of lust

"*I defeated lust*, which is gluttony carried to the extreme of greed. Because every unrestrained vice leads to a bigger vice. And Eve's gluttony, which was already blameworthy, led her to lust. It was no longer enough for her to enjoy pleasure by herself. She wanted to take her crime to a refined intensity and thus she became acquainted with lust and was a mistress of lust for her companion. I reversed the terms and instead of descending I have always ascended. Instead of causing other people to descend, I have always attracted them towards Heaven: of My honest companion, I made an angel.

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"[Since after conceiving Jesus] I possessed God and His infinite wealth with Him, I hastened to divest Myself of it saying: 'Here I am: may Your will be done for Him and by Him.' He is chaste who chastises not only his flesh but also his affections and his thoughts. I had to be the Chaste One in order to annul the One who had been Unchaste in her flesh, her heart and her mind. And I never abandoned My reservedness, not even by saying of My Son: 'He is Mine, I want Him,' since He belonged only to Me on earth, as He belonged only to God in Heaven.

"And yet all this was not sufficient to achieve for woman the peace lost by Eve. I obtained that for you at the foot of the Cross: when I saw Him dying, Whom you saw being born. When I felt My bowels being torn apart by the cry of My dying Creature, I became void of all femininity. I was no longer flesh, but an angel. Mary, the Virgin Spouse of the Spirit, died that moment. The Mother of Grace remained, Who gave you the Grace She generated from Her torture. The female reconsecrated 'woman' by me on Christmas night, achieved at the foot of the Cross the means to become a creature of Heaven.

"This I did for you, depriving Myself of all satisfactions, even of holy ones. And whereas you had been reduced by Eve to females not superior to the mates of animals, I made of you, *if you only wish so*, saints of God. I ascended for you. As I had done for Joseph, I lifted you higher up. The rock of Calvary is My Mount of Olives. From there I took My leap to carry to Heaven the resanctified soul of woman together with My flesh, now glorified because it had borne the Word of God and had destroyed in Me the very last trace of Eve. It had destroyed the last root of that tree with four poisonous branches, a root stuck in the sensuality that had dragged mankind to fall and that will go on biting at your intestines until the end of time and to the last woman" (*Poema*, I, 192-193).

Eve, together with Adam, ruined the world for the sake of *pleasure*. Mary (the new Eve), together with Christ (the new Adam), redeemed the world by *suffering*: the greatest, most unspeakable of all sufferings.

". . . to be Mother of the Son of God is blissful," [the Blessed Virgin says,] to be Mother of the Redeemer must be a destiny of deepest sorrow. . . . I feel My weight of sorrow increasing from hour to hour. And I shall have to bear it all My life. And even if I do

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not see the details, I feel that it will be heavier than if the whole world were placed on My shoulders of a woman, and I were to offer it to Heaven. I, I alone, poor woman!" (*Poema*, I, 157).

To say "the Redeemer's Mother" is to say "the Woman of Sorrows" (*Quad. '43*, p.642 [Dec. 8]).

"I, Who was the Innocent One," [the Blessed Virgin says,] "had to know also sorrow and sadness, because I was the Co-Redeemer" (*Poema*, I, 153).

Actually, suffering is a consequence of the original fault. Since the Blessed Virgin was exempted from original sin, we might expect that She should have been exempted from suffering also. However, as Co-Redemptrix, She was given over to suffering, so much so that She could say:

"I feel as if My heart were wrapped in burning thorns. And every time I breathe I am pierced by them" (*Poema*, IV, 718).

Just as Eve and Adam ruined the human race by their disobedience, so the new Eve and the new Adam redeemed it by Their *obedience.*

Mary says: ". . . Oh! The joy of removing from God's heart the bitterness of Eve's disobedience! . . .

"I redeemed that sin by going up the same stages as they descended. Disobedience was the beginning of the downfall: 'Do not eat and do not touch of that tree' said God [Gen. 2:17]. And man and woman did not respect that prohibition, although as kings of creation they were allowed to touch and eat of everything except of that tree because God wanted them to be inferior only to angels.

"The tree: the means to test their obedience. What does obedience to God's commands imply? It implies all possible good, because God commands nothing but good. What is disobedience? It is evil, because it brings about a rebellious mental state in which Satan can be active.

"Eve goes toward the tree, which, if avoided, would have caused her welfare, if approached, would cause her ruin. She goes there led by the childish curiosity of seeing what is special about it, and by a rashness that makes her consider God's command a useless one since she is strong and pure, the queen of Eden, where everything is subject

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to her and nothing can hurt her. Her presumption is her ruin. Presumption is the yeast of pride.

"At the tree she finds the Seducer, who sings his song of lies to her inexperience, to her beautiful virginal inexperience, to her badly guarded inexperience. 'You think there is evil here? No, there isn't. God told you because He wants to keep you as slaves under His power. You think you are king and queen? You are not even as free as wild animals. Animals can love one another with true love. You cannot. Animals are granted the gift of being creators like God. Animals generate little ones and see their families grow as much as they like. You do not. You are denied this joy. Why make you man and woman if you have to live thus? Be gods. You do not know the joy of being two in one flesh, that creates a third one and many more. Do not believe God when He promised you the joy of posterity seeing your children forming new families, leaving their father and mother for their families. He has given you a sham life: real life is to know the laws of life. Then you will be like gods and will be able to say to God: We are equal to You.'

"And the allurement continued because there was no will to break it, on the contrary there was the will to continue it and to learn what did not belong to man. And the forbidden tree becomes really mortal for the human race because from its branches there hangs the fruit of bitter knowledge that comes from Satan. And the woman becomes a female and with the yeast of satanic knowledge in her heart, she moves on to corrupt Adam. With their bodies and souls degraded and their morals corrupted, they became acquainted with sorrow and the death of both their souls deprived of Grace and of their bodies divested of immortality. And Eve's wound engendered suffering, which will not subside until the last couple on earth are dead.

"I went along the road of the two sinners, but in the opposite direction: *I obeyed. I obeyed in every way.* God inspired Me to be a virgin. *I obeyed.* When I loved virginity that made Me as pure as the first woman before she met Satan, God asked Me to get married. *I obeyed, elevating marriage to the degree of purity intended by God when He created the First Parents.* I was then convinced that My destiny was solitude in marriage and people's contempt because of My holy sterility, when God asked Me to be a Mother. *I obeyed. I believed that it was possible and that the word came from God, because I was filled with peace when I heard it.* I did not think: 'I

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deserved it.' I did not say: 'Now the world will admire Me, because I am like God, creating the flesh of God.' No, I did not. I lowered Myself in My humility.

"Joy gushed out of My heart like the stem of a rose. But it was soon decorated with sharp thorns and it was clenched in the tangle of sorrow, like branches enveloped by the bearbines of convolvuli.[105] Sorrow for the pain of My spouse: it suffocated My joy. Sorrow for the pain of My Son: a thorn that pierced My joy.

"Eve wanted pleasure, triumph, freedom. I accepted sorrow, humiliation, slavery. I gave up My peaceful life, the esteem of My spouse, My own freedom. I kept nothing for Myself. I became the maid of God in the flesh, in morals, in the spirit, relying on Him not only for the virginal conception, but also for the protection of My honour, for the consolation of My spouse, for the means suitable to elevate him also to the sublimation of marriage, so that we could restore man and woman to their lost dignity. I embraced the will of the Lord for Myself, My spouse and My Creature.

"I said 'Yes' for the whole three, as I was certain that God would not break His promise to assist Me in My sorrow of a spouse who realises she is considered guilty, and of a mother who knows she is generating a Son to deliver Him to sorrow. I said 'Yes' and nothing else. *That 'Yes' cancelled Eve's 'No' to God's command.* 'Yes, My Lord, as You wish. I will know what You want Me to know. I will live as You want Me to live. I will rejoice if You wish so. I will suffer for what You want Me to suffer. Yes, for ever, My Lord, from the moment Your ray made Me a Mother to the moment You called Me back to You. 'Yes,' for ever 'Yes.' All the good voices of the flesh, all the good passions of the spirit were under the weight of My perpetual 'Yes.' And above, on a diamond pedestal, there was My spirit, lacking wings to fly to You, but it was the master of the whole '*ego*' subdued and made Your servant. Servant in joy, servant in sorrow. But smile, o God. And be happy. Guilt has been defeated. It has been removed and destroyed. It lies under My heel, it was washed in My tears and destroyed by My obedience. The new Tree will be born of My bosom and it will bear the Fruit that knows all the evil because It suffered it all in Itself and will give all the good. All men will be able to come to It and I shall be happy if they take

105. "A genus of climbing plants, including the bindweed." [This note is found in the English edition of *Il poema dell'Uomo-Dio.* Translator.]

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of It, even if they do not remember that It was born of Me. Providing man is saved and God is loved, let it be done to His handmaid what is done to a clod of earth on which a tree is planted: a step to ascend" (*Poema*, I, 112-115).

Jesus says:

"In order to give you back the grace lost [by the *disobedience* of the first two human beings], two most Pure, most Innocent and most Good beings [Jesus and Mary] had to consummate supreme *obedience*. The salvation of the human race began in history with Mary's 'Let it be done' in My Archangel's presence. It was consummated when Jesus, on the cross, said 'It is accomplished.' These were the two most painful acts of obedience. Also the least compulsory, since My Mother and I, Who did not sin, were not obliged to expiate sin. We did nonetheless. We have redeemed your sin by obeying" (*Quad. '43*, p.294 [Aug. 29]).

Valtorta commented that

"Mary, the sinless woman, . . . suffered more than any other woman in order to be the Co-Redemptrix. . ." (*Poema*, VI, 1008).

"When She heroically said 'Yes,'" [Jesus explains,] "the Heavens bowed and venerated the *martyred Redemptrix*" (*Quad. '43*, p.618 [Dec. 3]).

Little wonder Our Lady cried out:

"How difficult it is to be the Mother of the Redemptor!" (*Poema*, IV, 879).

Little wonder our Lord told Valtorta:

"You have seen how much it cost both of Us to be Saviours. You know what all Our tortures were, and you have seen with how much generosity . . . and strength We underwent them out of charity, to save you[106] (*Quad. '44*, p.177 [Feb. 20] — *Dictation on Jesus' Passion and Mary's Sufferings.*

106. The last "you" is in the plural. [Editor.]

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iv) *The Effect of Mary's Association with Christ*

The effect of the association of Mary (the new Eve) with Christ (the new Adam) is the objective Redemption of the human race. Humanity was freed from the slavery of sin and death through the merits and atonement of Christ and Mary. (It must be noted that Mary's merits and atonement draw their co-redemptive efficacy entirely from Christ's own merits and atonement).

The Blessed Virgin declares that She was the one who *reestablished peace between Heaven and earth.* That peace had been destroyed by the sin of our first parents. Mary had

"*the joy of being the Woman by means of Whom peace was reestablished between Heaven and earth.*

"Oh! What a joy to have desired this peace for the sake of God and of men and to know that it was coming to the world through Me, the poor handmaid of the Almighty! What a joy to say: 'Men, do not cry any longer. I have in Me the secret that will make you happy. I cannot tell what it is because it is sealed in Me, in My heart, just as the Son is enclosed in My inviolate womb. But I am already bringing it to you, and the moment when you will see Him and hear His Holy name is drawing nearer and nearer'" (*Poema*, I, 112).

Maria Valtorta's writings describe Redemption, in its various aspects, as *a result of both Christ's redemptive activity and Mary's co-redemptive activity.* Redemption was wrought through the new Adam's blood and the new Eve's tears, by Christ's physical death and Mary's mystical death.

[Jesus addressing all of us through the Seer.] "You are redeemed by the blood of Christ and the tears of Mary" (*Quad. '44*, p.747 [Dec. 27]).

[That is why] "the value of Mary's tears was only one notch below that of My Blood" (*ibid.*).

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This is because they drew their efficacy from Christ's blood.

"I, Christ, have saved you by blood and suffering, and Mary, by suffering and tears" (*Quad. '43*, p.302 [Sept. 5]).

In *Lezioni sull'Epistola di Paolo ai Romani* [A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans], the Holy Spirit declares that the ninth hour was

"characterized by the last drop of divine Blood. Redemption came down from Heaven as a river of salvation flowing out of two innocent, wounded Hearts: those of the Son and His Mother.

"Believe Me, you have Life *not only through Jesus' merits: also through Mary's merits.*[107] Mary, Mother of Life, was a virginal, pure, innocent Mother. When She gave birth to Her dear Jesus, She did not experience the pain binding on all fallen flesh. She did, however, experience the bitter sufferings of the most painful childbirth there is: She brought you, o sinful humanity, to the new Life of grace.

"Humanity experienced death because of a single man. Mankind experiences Life through *the* Man.

"Through Adam, humanity inherited the fault and its consequences. Through Jesus, Son of God and Son of Mary, humanity again inherits Grace and its consequences.

"That Grace does not cancel all the earthly consequences of original sin. Suffering, death and temptations still exist, causing you sorrows, fears and struggles. Grace, however, giving you the hope of Heaven, helps you a great deal to bear today's sufferings. It helps you to face the fear of death by telling you about divine Mercy. It helps you to resist temptations and to master your instincts, by means of the supernatural help of Christ's merits dispensed through the Sacraments which He instituted" (*Lezioni sull'Epistola di Paolo ai Romani* [A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans], p.144-145.[108])

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107. This must be understood in the sense that, for us to be redeemed, God *wanted* more than the new Adam's merits and atonement. He wanted the new Eve's merits and atonement also. Without Her merits and atonement, our Redemption would not be exactly *as God wanted it and decreed it to be.*

108. Theologians usually maintain that the Blessed Virgin's merits and atonement met the standards of God's *generosity*, while those of Christ strictly met the standards of the Father's *Justice*. The Latin terminology they use is "*de congruo*" for Mary's

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[Jesus says to His Mother:] ". . . My [work of] Redemption *needed* also Your sufferings" (*Poema*, X, 28).

"[The Redeemer] died in His most holy humanity," [John speaking to Mary after the glorious Resurrection]. "And You died in Your heart, when You saw His horrible torture and His death. You have already suffered everything in order to be Redemptrix with Him" (*ibid.*, p.284).

[When the Virgin Mary thanked Lazarus for having bought a winding sheet for Christ, he replied:] "With Your suffering and Your motherly love, . . . You have purchased no mere winding sheet, but all of Christendom . . ." (*ibid.*, 297).

The world was truly redeemed with the price of Mary's suffering (added to that of Christ's).

[Jesus says:] "The blessed [who are in Heaven] were saved by Our sacrifice [the sacrifice of Christ and Mary]" (*Quad. '43*, p.307 [Sept. 6]).

Jesus said:

"The true meaning [of Mary's name] will begin to appear clearly to the true faithful and loving ones in a dreadful hour of torture, when the Mother is to be tortured with Her Son, when *{the Redemptrix redeems} with the Redeemer,* in the eyes of the whole world and for ever and ever (*Poema*, V, 248).

A little further, Jesus speaks of what

"God demands of Her so that *the required amount for the Redemption of the world is met.* Mary won't disappoint God. *She has never disappointed Him.* He asked for *total* love: She gave it. He will ask for *total* sacrifice: She will give it. When She has consummated the greatest sacrifice with Me, through Me, and for

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merits, whose value derived from their "*congruity with*" (conformity to) Christ's merits. The latter stood on their own, and are called "*de condigno*" because their own intrinsic *dignity* (or worth) meets the Father's justice. This is also Saint Pius X's teaching in his encyclical *Ad diem illum Laetissimum*: "Since Mary. . . has been associated by Jesus Christ in the work of Redemption, She merits for us *de congruo*, in the language of theologians what Jesus Christ merits for us *de condigno*" (A.A.S. 26 [1903-1904], p. 454. English Translation: Carlen, Claudia, I.H.M., ed. *The Papal Encyclicals, 1740-1981.* Vol. 3, p.14, #14.) [The contents of this footnote by Fr. Roschini have been expanded for greater clarity. Editor.]

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the world, then true worshippers and those who are really filled with love, will understand the true meaning of Her name. . ." (*ibid.*, p.249).

v) *The Foundation for Co-Redemption*

This foundation is found in Holy Scripture, in both the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament *predicts* the Co-Redemptrix and the Redeemer all in the same breath; the New contains the *fulfillment* of this prediction.

Co-Redemption in the Old Testament

The prophecy concerning co-redemption is found in Genesis 3:15, the passage called the *proto-evangelium*: "I will put enmities between you [the diabolical snake] and the Woman, and your seed and Her seed: She shall crush your head, and you shall lie in wait for Her heel" [Douay].

In *Il Poema dell'Uomo-Dio*, during the third year of His Public Ministry, Jesus exalted women, unjustly considered as inferior beings. He concluded:

"I tell you, the condition of women is about to change . . ., and that will be fair. Just as I will obtain grace and redemption for all men, so will a Woman for all women."

"A Woman? How could a Woman ever redeem?" Judas of Kerioth says, laughing. [Judas was the first one to oppose the Co-Redemptrix.]

"Believe Me," [Jesus replies,] "She has already begun Her work of redemption. Do you know what it means to redeem?"

"Sure I do! It's to remove from sin."

"Yes, but just removing from sin would not be very useful. The Adversary is immortal. He would simply come back to set up his traps. But God's voice came from the garden of Eden and said,

'I will put enmities between you [the Adversary] and the Woman, and your seed and Her seed:
She shall crush your head,
and you shall lie in wait for Her heel' [Gen 3:15].

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He can do no more than setting a trap, because the Woman has and will have within Herself what to overcome the Adversary with. She has been redeeming since She began to exist. Her work of Redemption is active, though hidden. Soon, though, She will come out in full sight of the world, and women will gain strength in Her."

"That You redeem, fine," [Judas objects]. "But a Woman who could... [redeem], I don't accept that, Master."

"Don't you remember Tobiah and his canticle?"[109]

"Yes, but he's talking about Jerusalem."

"Would God still be present in the *Tabernacle* in Jerusalem? Can God, in His glory, remain in the presence of the sins committed within the Temple's walls? Another Tabernacle was necessary, one that would be holy. It would be the Star that leads the lost to the Most High. This Tabernacle is the Co-Redemptrix. For ages unto ages She will rejoice that She is the Mother of the redeemed.

"'You shall shine with a glorious light:
and all the nations of the Earth shall bow down before You.
The nations from afar shall come to You:
and shall bring gifts,
and shall adore the Lord in You . . . .
They shall call upon Your great name. . . .
Those who do not listen to You shall be among the accursed . . .
and blessed are those who shall draw right next to You. . . .
You shall rejoice in Your children
because they shall all be blessed,
and shall be gathered together to the Lord.'

"That is the Co-Redemptrix' real canticle. It is already being sung in Heaven by the Angels who can see... The new heavenly Jerusalem begins in Her. Yes, that is the truth. The world ignores it, and so do the Rabbis of Israel, steeped in darkness as they are..." Jesus immerses Himself in His thoughts...

"Who is He talking about?" Judas asks Philip who is by him.

Before Philip can answer, Eliza, who was putting cheese and black olives on the table, says rather harshly:

"He's talking about His Mother. Don't you understand?"

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109. Tobit exhorts Jerusalem to pray to God so He would rebuild His Tabernacle in it (Tobit 13:10-23). [But Christ discloses the formerly hidden meaning of this passage: "Jerusalem" represents Mary. Also, Jesus goes on to quote a few verses from Tobit, and the text He quotes is very similar to that of the Vulgate (and Douay)!... unlike the Italian translation of Tobit quoted by Fr. Roschini on p.369. Editor.]

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"But I was never told that the Prophets had spoken of Her as a martyr. . . They speak only about the Redeemer, and. . ."

"So you think people can suffer only in their *bodies*? Don't you know that that's nothing for a mother compared with seeing her son die? I don't know what your heart is like, but can't you tell, since you're so proud of your mind, that a mother would be glad to be tormented and die dozens of times so she wouldn't hear as little as a moan from her son? You're a man, and it's your business to learn. I'm just a woman and a mother, but I tell you, you know less than I do, because you don't even know what your mother's heart is like. . ."

"You offend me!" [Judas exclaims].

"No, I'm an old woman and I'm giving you advice. Make sure your heart is wise and you'll avoid tears and punishments. Do that if you can."

The Apostles, especially Jude of Alpheus, James of Zebedee, Bartholomew and the Zealot, glance at one another and bow their heads to hide their smiles. Eliza hit the nail on the head, speaking to the apostle who thinks that he is perfect. Jesus, still deep in thought, does not hear anything (*Poema*, VII, 1581-1583).

In some passages of Valtorta's writings, the Virgin Mary is called "the Woman who vanquishes Satan" (*Quad. '43*, p.416 [Nov. 8]; *Poema*, IV, 719, note 2, found in D2) Clear allusions are made to the *proto-evangelium* prophecy (Gen 3:15).

Co-redemption in the New Testament

The co-redemption prophecy was completely fulfilled at the Annunciation, as soon as Mary said: "Be it done unto Me according to your word" [Lk 1:38; Douay]. Through these words She freely gave the world its Redeemer.

Mary is praying in Her humble little house in Nazareth.

"Most High Lord God, do not delay any longer in sending Your Servant to bring peace to the world. Grant us the favourable time and the pure and prolific virgin for the coming of Your Christ.

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Father, Holy Father, grant Me, Your servant to offer My life for this purpose. Grant Me to die after seeing Your Light and Your Justice on earth and after knowing that our Redemption has been accomplished. O Holy Father, send the Promise of the Prophets to the earth. Send the Redeemer to Your maidservant, so that in the hour of My death, Your abode may be opened to Me, as its gates have already been opened by Your Christ for all those who have hoped in You. Come, come, O Spirit of the Lord. Come to the faithful who are expecting You. Come, Prince of Peace!. . ." Mary remains absorbed thus. . .

The curtain moves fast, as if someone behind it ventilated it or shook it to draw it. And a pearl-white light mixed with pure silver makes the slightly yellow walls clearer and makes the colours of the cloths brighter and Mary's raised face more spiritual. And in such light, while the curtain is still drawn on the mystery to be accomplished, the Archangel prostrates himself. . . . It is a transhumanised appearance. . . . "Hail, Mary, full of Grace, Hail!" The voice is a sweet arpeggio as of pearls thrown on a precious metal plate. Mary is startled and lowers Her head. And She is even more startled when She sees the shining creature kneeling at about a metre from Her and looking at Her with infinite veneration, his hands crossed over his chest" (*Poema*, I, 103-104).

The Angel calms Her and reassures Her. He announces to Her that She will be the Mother of the Son of the Most High, who must be named Jesus and Whose reign will have no end. The Angel confirms that She would preserve Her virginity because She would conceive by the intervention of the Holy Spirit. He then comforts Her with the news of what happened to Her relative Elizabeth. Then he says:

"The world, Heaven, the Eternal Father are awaiting Your word!"

Mary crosses Her hands over Her breast and bowing down deeply, She says: "I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let what you have said be done to Me." [Within seconds, the Angel disappeared] (*Poema*, I, 105).

The Word's Incarnation in Mary's most pure womb marks the beginning of the Redemption of the human race. Thus the Virgin Mary

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"by Her sacrifice, has begun [the work of] Redemption" (*Quad. '43*, p.307 [Sept. 6]).

Sorrowfully, yet joyfully, She gave up Her Son, the Saviour, for *our* salvation. (See *Quad. '44*, p.40 [Dec. 26]).

Nazareth and Eden are thus symmetrically opposed. Eve's "No" to God, uttered on the instigation of the angel of darkness, was *annulled* by Mary's "Yes," the new Eve's answer to the Angel of light.

"I said 'Yes' and nothing else. *That 'Yes' cancelled Eve's 'No' to God's command.* 'Yes, My Lord, as You wish. . . . I will suffer for what You want Me to suffer. Yes, for ever, My Lord, from the moment Your ray made Me a Mother . . . Guilt has been defeated. It has been removed and destroyed. It lies under My heel,[110] it was washed in My tears and destroyed by My obedience. The new Tree[111] will be born of My bosom and it will bear the Fruit that knows all the evil because It suffered it all in Itself and will give all the good" (*Poema*, I, 114-115).

[Mary speaking.] "I offered Myself to God without holding anything back, although I immediately understood how much I would suffer as a result of that. I remembered the Prophets and God's light made Me understand their words very clearly. As soon as I said to the Angel: 'Let it be done,' I began to learn to consecrate Myself to the greatest suffering any mother would experience" (*Poema*, X, 329-330).

"It is with My own free will that I had to accept the gift [of becoming Jesus' Mother] and all its consequences. Every gift from God brings a great deal of happiness and, as well, demands a great commitment. God never does violence to people to make them accept His gifts. He asks His creatures, and if they say 'no' to the spiritual voice talking to them, He does not force them" (*Poema*, VI, 1099).

We might wonder: since the Virgin Mary was inexorably associated with Her Divine Son, did She become aware at the Annunciation of His most sorrowful destiny with all its tribulations? The answer is affirmative. Maria

110. Allusion to the *proto-evangelium's* words 'She shall crush your head' (Gen. 3:15).

111. Allusion to the Tree of Eden.

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Valtorta wrote a great deal on this topic.

[Mary speaking to Mary of Clopas.] "The Angel told Me that while remaining a Virgin, I would conceive a Son. He would be conceived by God, so He would be called the Son of God, and that is what He really is. . . . When I heard that, I easily remembered Isaiah's words: 'A Virgin . . . shall bear a Son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel' [Is 7:14; Douay]. . . I remembered *all* of Isaiah! All of it. Where he talks about the forerunner. . . *Where he talks about the Man of sorrows*, red all over with blood, unrecognizable. . . a leper. . . because of our sins. . . The sword has been in My heart ever since, and everything has driven it in deeper: the Angels' canticle, Simeon's words, the coming of the wise men from the East, and everything. Everything. . . . Though I am a mother, above all I am God's daughter and handmaid. . . Where do I find peace of mind? In doing God's will. My serenity? In doing God's will. If I had to do a man's will, I might be uneasy: even the wisest man can make mistakes when he imposes his will. Not so with God! (*ibid.*, 967-968)

Let me quote the following again:

"I remembered the Prophets and God's light made Me understand their words very clearly. As soon as I said to the Angel: 'Let it be done,' I began to learn to consecrate Myself to the greatest suffering any mother would experience" (*Poema*, X, 329-330).

Elsewhere Maria Valtorta developed this theme more thoroughly.

On account of the plenitude of divine gifts She had received,[112] Mary experienced, in Her spirit, the entire range of Her Son's sufferings, either *beforehand or at the same time.*

Though full of God's light, Her immaculate soul was continually overcast with the sorrowful shadow of the cross. Not only the cross: all the struggles and obstacles also that were to afflict Her Jesus until the Passion.

From the very beginning of Her mission as the Son of God's Mother, She remained alone with the One Who is alone, the great

112. The gifts of the Holy Spirit, for instance *wisdom* and *knowledge*, always go hand in hand with grace. Mary, being full of grace, also received the plenitude of divine gifts.

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misunderstood One. They stood alone before Their vast mission of love and the immense hatred of the world. Both obeyed, the One to death on the cross, the Other, to the renunciation and death of every maternal right.[113]

United, They went forth on Their way, following God's mysterious dictates; They walked with the steady pace of heroes and saints. Not only was the road harsh: They suffered also because the world did not understand.

The Mother, all by Herself, was "the whole world" for Her Son. . . *Singlehandedly*, She gave Her Child the comfort and cares that He needed. She alone understood the secret, complex sufferings of Christ's life on earth. Christ's life was but a long Gethsemane and a long Passion that climaxed in the Garden of Gethsemane and His great Passion.

While Mary, from the crib to the cross, lived entirely for Jesus, Jesus received everything from Her. She was peaceful, more yet, serene, as if She did not know the future. She always had a smile for Jesus and words that encouraged the afflicted Master and consoled the divine Martyr. She was like the sea whose cheerful, peaceful blue surface conceals storms and struggles in the depth of its waters. With dignity, strength and sweetness, Mary gave Her Son every comfort until "everything was accomplished." Only then did She let the dams of Her strength burst. Only then did the ocean of Her grief, as Mother and believer, overwhelm Her as far as God allowed. Thus overwhelmed, She was even more so the Co-Redemptrix.

Mary, whether really present or only so in spirit, was always an angel of comfort at Jesus' side. Twice only, at crucial moments in Jesus Christ's life on earth, was the Mother replaced by Angels to serve and comfort Christ. The Gospel tells us [in Mt 4:1-11 and Lk 22:43]. This was not due to lack of care on Her part, but was willed by God, especially in Gethsemane. This was the time for the great abandonment, which was to complete the Passion and make it perfect. Let the reader reflect that Mary was, from eternity, the Woman who vanquishes Satan; for all and for the First-of-all — the God-Man — She was Cause for joy. Her absence, therefore, enabled Satan to tempt Christ: directly the first time [Mt 4:1-11], indirectly

113. Benedict XV's apostolic letter *Inter Sodalicia* explicitly mentions Mary's renunciation to Her maternal rights over Her Son for the sake of our Redemption (*A.A.S.*, 10 [1918], p. 181). Pius XII also states this in his encyclical *Mystici corporis Christi* (*A.A.S.*, 35 [1943], p.247).

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the second time, through the "sorrow to the point of death" [Mt 26:38]. (Jesus experienced this sorrow because He had not yet accomplished the plans of infinite Mercy for the children of Adam.) Although Mary was absent by God's decree, Satan was overcome because Mary prayed and Her prayer sustained Her Son Jesus in His supreme struggle.

Mary was really the source of *Her Son's comfort. She fully participated in His mission and Passion.* The tortures of misunderstanding, slander, hatred, and treacheries wounded the holy hearts of Mother and Son at the same time. Yet, despite being afflicted, Her Immaculate Heart supplied balm to heal all Her Child's wounds. For Him She really was the spiced wine spoken of in the Canticle of Canticles [8:2]. She stood by the cross [see Jn 19:25], just as She had been by Jesus' crib and near the workbench in the carpentry shop. She was at the Master's feet and followed Him whenever She could. She suffered heroically and Her love was perfect: She loved Christ as His Mother and as a most holy believer. All in all, Mary was Christ's supreme source of comfort, right until He drew His last breath in His martyrdom. Her own Passion was consummated at this time. Her Passion was bloodless but nonetheless horrible. She experienced immeasurable grief because of the horrible deicide and the heartrending murder of God's only Son and Her only Son. However, She did not give free rein to Her grief until after the ninth hour, because He needed Her maternal comfort until then. (*Poema*, IV, 718, note 2).

While Christ died physically, Mary underwent a "mystical death at the foot of the cross" (*Quad. '43*, p.692 [Dec. 25]).

vi) *The Ultimate Reason for Redemption and Co-Redemption*

What urged the Redeemer and the Co-Redemptrix to pay the price of so much suffering to accomplish the Redemption of humanity, was love: simply ineffable love.

One day, when Jesus' heart-rending redemptive Passion was imminent, Mary said to Jesus that the Father, Whose will They lovingly performed, would help Them in that fearful hour. Jesus replied:

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"Yes, Mother. Love will help Us, and We will help one another in love. We shall redeem with love. . ."

Jesus is now at His Mother's side. He puts His hand on Her shoulder, and She lifts Her face up to look at Her dear Jesus. Although handsome and healthy, He is destined to be disfigured by torture and die of a thousand wounds. She says: "With love and suffering. . . Yes. Together. . ."

No one speaks. . . The Apostles and women disciples, sitting around the two main protagonists of the future tragedy of Golgotha, look like statues deep in thought. . .

Aurea[114] is petrified on her stool. . . Yet, she is the first one to regain her senses. Sliding down on her knees, she lands just besides Mary. She hugs Mary's knees and leans her head on them, saying: "All that for me too!. . . Do I *ever* cost You both a lot! Do I ever love You both for what I'm going to cost You! Oh! Mother of my God, bless me so I won't cost both of You all that for nothing. . ." (*Poema*, VI, 967-968).

In response to the inexpressible torments which the Redeemer and the Co-Redemptrix suffered out of love for us, every redeemed person should repeat: "Do I ever cost much! Do I *ever* love You both for what I cost You!. . . I hope I won't have cost You both all that for nothing."

". . . Jesus' life, as well as Mine," [Mary speaking,] "were always guided and prompted by love" (*Poema*, X, 328).

To conclude: we no longer belong to ourselves — as Saint Paul said (1 Cor. 6:20). Let us belong to Jesus and Mary Who redeemed us at a great price, with their inexpressible, meritorious, and atoning sufferings.

b) *Mary, Dispenser of All Graces*

So far in Valtorta's writings, we have seen that Mary is indissolubly associated with the Redeemer as Co-Redemptrix in *accomplishing* our Redemption. With

114. See note 91 on p.149.

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Christ, She acquired all redemptive graces (phase one of Her mediation).

We will now see that the Blessed Virgin is indissolubly associated with Christ also in *applying* Redemption to every individual of the human race. With Christ, She has been dispensing all redemptive graces to all humans (phase two of Her mediation).

Her association with Christ is thus universal in two respects. It applies to all humans (*subjective* universality); it concerns all graces (*objective* universality). Jesus tells the Seer:

"Faith, hope, and charity come from Her. She is God's gate. Temperance, justice, strength, prudence come from Her. Grace and graces come from Her. Salvation, the God-made-man, comes from Her.

"Oh My Mother! For all, from the Pontiff to the last of believers, You are the holy Ciborium in which the Eucharist waits until it is given to those who believe.

"*All graces flow through Your inviolate body and Your Immaculate Heart.* Only those who ask You for mysteries and truths, Sacraments and gifts, are able to understand them in true wisdom, and taste them in good conscience so as to bear fruit.

"You are a screen between souls and the Sun, between God and souls. Mankind can contemplate the Divinity through You, and through You, humanity can be offered to the perfect God. You, Mother, having given God to mankind, are now giving mankind to God, teaching it with Your smile and Your love.

"Little John,[115] always come to Me through Mary. That is the secret of the saints.

"She is the closed Door which human violence has never forced open and never shall force open. She is the holy Door which God alone can go through. She opens only when a child of God knocks with love, and then She opens with goodwill. The humbler and simpler the spirit that turns to Her, the quicker She opens and welcomes you. She welcomes you to teach you wisdom and love, holding you in Her motherly arms" (*Quad. '44*, p.560-561 [August 2]).

115. "Little John" is the affectionate nickname Jesus gave Maria Valtorta, comparing her role to that of John the Evangelist [Publisher — Kolbe's].

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Valtorta's writings state the *fact* of Mary's association with Jesus in dispensing all graces. They describe also its *foundation* and its *mode.*

i) *The Fact of Mary's Association with Jesus in Dispensing All Graces*

Valtorta describes the three Wise Men's visit to the child Jesus. After worshipping Him and giving Him gifts,

". . . the Magi take leave kneeling down once again kissing Jesus' feet. Mary, bending down over the Child, takes His hand and guides it, in a blessing gesture over the head of each Wise Man" (*Poema*, I, 231).

Jesus later addressed Valtorta to draw a kind, significant lesson from Mary's maternal gesture:

"It is Mary who takes the hand of Jesus, Who does not yet know how to bless, and She guides it in the holy gesture. *It is always Mary who takes Jesus's hand and guides it. Even now.* Now Jesus knows how to bless. But sometimes His pierced hand falls down tired and disheartened, because He knows that it is useless to bless. You destroy My blessing. It falls also indignant, because you curse Me. It is Mary then Who removes the disdain from My hand with Her kisses. Oh! the kiss of My Mother! Who can resist that kiss? And then, with Her slender, but lovingly irresistible fingers, She takes My wrist and forces Me to bless. I cannot reject My Mother, but you must go to Her, and make Her your Advocate. She is My Queen, before being yours, and Her love for you makes such allowances that no one can possibly imagine or understand. *And even without any word, but only with Her tears, and the memory of My Cross, the sign of which She makes Me trace in the air, She pleads your cause and exhorts Me: 'You are the Saviour. Therefore save'*" (*Poema*, I, 237).

The Virgin described Herself:

"I am the Mediatrix of all graces" (May 31, 1953 — *Jesus' Confidences and Advice*).

Valtorta repeats this affirmation many times in equivalent terms.

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This is the first year of Jesus' Public Ministry. Levi, a young orphan shepherd, kneels before Him, saying:

"Your servant asks You a favour. Take me to Your Mother . . . that I may see the face of a mother. . ."

[Jesus answers:] "Come. *What is asked in My Mother's name, I grant in My Mother's name*" (*Poema*, II, 316).

Mary's name is most powerful at Her Son's side! The secret to obtain graces from Jesus is precisely to use "the weapon of His Mother's word." Such is the lesson resulting from a graceful, idyllic, and significant episode that took place in Jesus' second year of Public Ministry. Peter, though married, was childless. For this reason, he wished to adopt little Marziam, an orphan, and leave him with his wife [when he would be called to travel.] He made his request of Jesus, but Jesus refused. Peter went to Mary, begging Her to intercede in his favour with Her Son. She agreed to help. Thus, during a conversation with Jesus, She skillfully led the topic to Peter, and said:

". . . Peter . . . deserves all respect."

"Yes," [Jesus replies]. "Peter is very good. I would do anything for him, because he deserves it."

"If he heard You, he would say with his good frank smile: 'Ah! My Lord, that is not true!' And he would be right."

"Why, Mother?" But Jesus smiles, because He has already understood.

"Because You are not satisfying him by giving him a son. He told Me all his hopes, his desires. . . and Your refusals."

"And did he not tell You the reasons justifying them?"

"Yes, he did and he added: 'It is true. . . but I am a man, a poor man. Jesus persists in seeing a great man in me. But I know that I am a poor fellow, and so. . . He could give me a child. I got married to have them. . . and I will die without any.' And he said — pointing at the boy who, delighted because of the lovely {tunic} bought by Peter, had kissed him, saying: 'Beloved father' — he said: 'See, when this little creature, whom only ten days ago I did not know, says that to me, I feel that I become softer than butter and sweeter than honey and I weep, because. . . every day that goes by, takes this child away from me.'"

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Mary becomes silent, watching Jesus, studying His face, waiting for a word. . . But Jesus has placed His elbow on His knee, resting His Head in His hand and is silent, looking at the green expanse of the orchard.

Mary takes His hand and caressing it She says: "Simon has this *great* desire. . . When I went with him, he did nothing but speak to Me about it, and his reasons are so good that. . . I could say nothing to keep him quiet. They are the same reasons that all women and mothers think of. The boy is not strong. If he were as strong as You were. . . oh! he could have faced the life of a disciple without any fear. But he is so thin!. . . He is very intelligent, very good... but nothing more. When a little dove is so delicate, you cannot throw it in the air to let it fly very early, as you do with strong ones. The shepherds are good. . . but they are still men. Children need women. Why do You not leave him with Simon? While You refuse him a son of his own, born of him,[116] I understand the reason. A son is like an anchor. And Simon, who is destined to such a great task, cannot be hindered by anchors. But You must agree that he is to be the 'father' of all the sons You will be leaving him. How can he be a father if he has had no training with a child? A father must be sweet. Simon is good, but not sweet. He is impulsive and intolerant. Only a little creature can teach him the fine art of being indulgent to whoever is weak. . . Consider Simon's destiny. . . He is Your successor after all! Oh! I must say that cruel word! But for all the sorrow it causes Me saying it, listen to Me. I would never advise You anything unless it were good. Marziam. . . You want to make a perfect disciple of him. . . But he is only a boy. You. . . You will be going before he is a man. To whom then can You give Him, to complete his formation, better than Simon? Finally, poor Simon, You know how much trouble he has had, with his mother-in-law, also because of You. And yet he has not picked up a tiny part of his past, of his freedom of a year ago, to be left in peace by mother-in-law, whom not even You have been able to change. And his poor wife? She is longing so much to love and to be loved. Her mother... oh! Her husband? A dear domineering man. . . No affection is ever given to her without exacting too much. . . Poor woman!. . . Leave her the boy. Listen, Son. For the time being we will take him with us. I will come to Judea, too. You will take Me to one of My com-

116. Peter and Porphirea were a childless, barren couple. [Editor.]

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panions of the Temple, who is almost a relative, because she is of the House of David. She lives at Beth-Tsur. I will be pleased to see her, if she is still alive. Then, when we go back to Galilee, we will give Him to Porphirea. When we are near Bethsaida, Peter will take him. When we come here, so far, the boy will stay with her. Ah! You are smiling now! So You are going to please Your Mother. Thank You, My Jesus."

"Yes, let it be done, as You wish." Jesus stands up and calls out loud: "Simon of Jonah: come here."

Peter starts and rushes down the steps. "What do You want, Master?"

"Come here, you usurper and corrupter!"

"Me? Why? What have I done, Lord?"

"You have corrupted My Mother. That is why you wanted to be alone. What shall I do with you?"

But Jesus smiles and Peter recovers confidence.

"Oh!" he says: "You really frightened me! But now You are laughing. . . What do You want from me, Master? My life? I have but that, because You have taken everything. . . But if You want, I will give it to You."

"I do not want to take anything from you. I want to give you something. But do not take advantage of your victory and do not disclose the secret to the others, you most artful fellow who *defeats the Master by means of the weapon of His Mother's word.* You will have the boy, but. . ."

Jesus can say no more, because Peter, who had knelt down, bounces to his feet and kisses the Master with such delight that he makes the words die on His lips.

"Thank Her, not Me. But remember that this must be of assistance to you, and not an impediment. . ."

"My Lord, You will not have to repent of the gift. . . Oh! Mary! May You be always blessed, You holy and good. . ." And Peter, who has fallen on his knees again, weeps, kissing Mary's hand. . . (*Poema*, III, 398-400).

The real — I could say "magical" — efficacy of this "secret" is manifestly portrayed in various other episodes of *Il Poema dell'Uomo-Dio.* I will now quote some of the most significant ones.

One day a poor mother, carrying her paralyzed child,

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came to Jesus. Mary met her half-way, took the child into Her arms and went back to Her Son.

She kneels down and says: "Son! For the sake of this mother!" Nothing else.

Jesus . . . smiles and says [to the child's mother]: "Woman, come here." The woman goes beside Mary. Jesus lays His hand on her head and says only: "Be happy," and He has not yet finished saying the words, when the boy, who so far had been lying heavily on Mary's arms, with his legs hanging loose, sits up all of a sudden and with a cry of joy: "{Mommie}!", he {quickly takes refuge on} his mother's {bosom}.

The shouts of hosanna seem to be penetrating the sky now all red at sunset.

The woman, clasping her son to heart, does not know what to say and she asks: "What must I do to tell You that I am happy?"

And Jesus, caressing her once again: "You must be good and love God and your neighbour and bring your son up in this love."

But the woman is not yet content. She would like to... she would like to... and at last she asks: "A kiss of Yours and of Your Mother's to my child."

Jesus bends down and kisses him and Mary does likewise. And while the woman is going away happy, surrounded by cheering friends, Jesus explains to the landlady:[117] "Nothing else was needed. He was in My Mother's arms. Even without any word I would have cured him, because She is happy when She can relieve distress *and I want to make Her happy.*" And Jesus and Mary exchange one of those glances that only one who has seen them can understand, so deeply meaningful are they (*Poema*, II, 444).

Another episode takes place early during Jesus' third year of Public Ministry. Jesus sends two disciples, John of Endor and Syntika, to prepare Asia Minor for the Gospel. Eight Apostles are taking them to their destination. They get on a little boat in Ptolemais and head for Tyre. As they row to the open sea, it begins to rain. Gusts of wind bear against the poor fishermen and start pushing

117. Anna, the wife of Jude the elder. [The English translation of *Il poema* has "landlord" instead of "landlady" (Italian *padrona*). Editor.]

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the little boat towards reefs by a nearby cape. Having, at last, made it to the cape, they consider interrupting their voyage.

But the idea prevails that "the Master is to be obeyed even against common sense. And He said that they must arrive at Tyre in one day." So they go on. . .

The sea calms all of a sudden. They notice the phenomenon and James of Alpheus says: "The reward of obedience."

They pursue their journey to Tyre.

John of Zebedee looks at the sky and smiles and he suddenly begins to sing . . .:

"Hail, Star of the Morning,
Jasmine of the night,
Golden Moon of my Heaven,
Holy Mother of Jesus.

The sailor hopes in You,
Who suffers and dies dreams of You,
Shine, holy pious Star,
Upon those who love you, Mary!. . ."

He sings out happily in a tenor voice.

"What are you doing? We are talking of Jesus and you are singing of Mary?" asks his brother [James].

"He is in Her and She is in Him. But [as a man] He is because She was. . . Let me sing. . ." And he starts singing with his whole heart, leading all the others. . .

They thus reach Tyre where they land without any difficulty in the little port . . . (*Poema*, V, 48-49).

In Tyre they board a ship belonging to a pagan Cretan called Nicomedes. They head for Seleucia despite the violent wind. The sea is growing rougher and rougher.

"With a frightening crash a part of a mast . . . breaks off . . . . . Never seen a storm like this! . . ." Another wave sweeps the deck drenching all those on it. . . . Another whirlwind, and another piece of a mast falls striking a man, who is not washed overboard only because the wave carries him against an obstacle (*ibid.*, 56-57).

The man is cut to the bone from the temple to the nape of the neck. Grabbing him, Peter takes him below

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deck. Syntika motherly takes care of him. When the bleeding slows down, she applies some anointment which the Blessed Virgin had prepared, and begins to pray. Meanwhile

> the storm is still raging on the deck and the ship is pitching awfully (*ibid.*, 58).

Nicomedes of Crete decides to offer a sacrifice to Venus. Peter is vehemently opposed. Nicomedes nonetheless lights some incense, throws it into the sea; offers some liquids to Venus and casts them overboard. The waves, far from calming down, become more and more furious and ominous.

> The waves [wash] away all the paraphernalia of the rite and nearly [sweep] away Nicomedes as well. . .
>
> [Peter shouts:] "{Some answer from your goddess!} It's our turn now. We have One as well, purer than that one made of foam, but then. . . Sing, John, as you did yesterday, and we will follow you, and let us see!"
>
> "Yes, let us see!" [Nicomedes answers.] "But if it comes to the worst, I will throw you overboard as propitiatory victims."
>
> "All right," [Peter says]. "Come on, John!"
>
> And John strikes up his song ["Hail, Star of the Morning"; see previously], followed by all [his companions], including Peter, who usually does not sing, as he is always out of tune. The Cretan is watching them, with folded arms and a smile that is half angry and half ironical. After the song, they pray with their arms stretched out. . . . They then sing louder. They thus alternate songs with prayers without fear or interruptions, although they are struck by the waves. . . . The violence of the waves really begins to abate slowly. . . .
>
> The face of the Cretan is a poem of amazement. . . Peter casts sidelong glances at him and continues praying. John smiles and sings louder. . . The others follow him exceeding the roar of the waves more and more clearly as the sea calms down into a normal motion and the wind begins to blow favourably.
>
> [Peter says to the Cretan] "Well? What do you think of it?. . ."
>
> "But what did you say?" [the Cretan asks]. "What formula is it?"
>
> "That of the True God and of His holy Handmaid. . . ."

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". . . How strange! But that Star that you worship, who is it? Venus, isn't it?"

"You should say: 'that you venerate.' We worship God only. But She has nothing to do with Venus. She is Mary. Mary of Nazareth, the Hebraic Mary, the Mother of Jesus the Messiah of Israel" (*ibid.*, 59-60).

ii) *The Foundation for Mary's Association with Jesus in Dispensing All Graces.*

It is both biblical and dogmatic.

The Biblical Foundation

The power of Mary's mediation is highlighted by two events in the Gospel: Mary's visit to Her relative Elizabeth, and Mary's intercession with Her Son at the wedding in Cana.

When Elizabeth greeted the Lord's Mother, she alluded to John the Baptist's sanctification in her womb. She said to Mary, for one thing:

"You are blessed for the Holiness You have brought to my son, whom I feel leaping with joy, like a happy little kid, in my womb, because he feels free from the burden of guilt, and is called to be the Predecessor, sanctified before Redemption by the Holy One Who is growing within You!" (*Poema*, I, 135).

Mary confirmed this in a dictation to Valtorta.

". . . My presence had sanctified the Baptist . . ." (*Poema*, I, 153).

Our Lady went on to comment on other exclamations by Elizabeth: "How much pain one must suffer to be a mother! . . . Mary! Mary! Let me put my hands on Your bosom!" (*Poema*, I, 149).

"'Let me press my hands on Your bosom.'" Oh, if you always asked Me for that when you suffer!

"I am the *Eternal Bearer* of Jesus. He is in My womb . . . like the Host in the monstrance. Who comes to Me, finds Him. Who

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leans on Me, touches Him. Who addresses Me, speaks to Him. I am His Dress. He is My Soul. My Son is united to Me, His Mother, more, much more now, than He was in the nine months that He was in My womb. And every pain is appeased, every hope flourishes and *every grace flows for those who come to Me and rest their heads against My bosom.*

"I pray for you. Remember that. The beatitude of being in Heaven, living in the ray of God, does not cause Me to forget My children who are suffering on the earth. And I pray. And all Heaven prays, because Heaven loves. Heaven is living charity. And Charity has mercy on you. But *even if I were all by Myself, My prayer would be sufficient for the needs of those who hope in God.* Because I never stop praying for you all, for the holy and the wicked, to give joy to the holy, to give repentance to the wicked that they might be saved.

"Come, come, o children of My sorrow. I am waiting for you at the foot of the Cross to grant you graces" (*Poema*, I, 153-154).

Let us now quote Zechariah's noble words to the Virgin Mary after John the Baptist's birth.

"When You came here, You brought us all the graces, because everywhere You go, o Full of Grace, God works His miracles, and holy are those walls which You enter, holy become the ears which listen to Your voice, and holy the flesh You touch. Holy the hearts, because You grant graces . . ." (*Poema*, I, 156).

Thus Mary's mediation obtained the first in a series of *spiritual* graces — John the Baptist's sanctification. The first in a series of *material* graces was also granted through Mary's mediation. This was the changing of water into wine at the wedding in Cana, at the beginning of Jesus' Public Ministry.

One day, Jesus was in Bethsaida, in Peter's house. Jude Thaddeus, His cousin, came to Him and said:

"I have come from Capernaum, I went there by boat and I have come here in the same boat to gain time. Your Mother sends me; She says: 'Susannah is getting married tomorrow; please come to the wedding.' Mary will be there, and also my mother and brothers. All the relatives have been invited. You would be the only one absent, and they ask You to come and make the young couple happy."

Jesus bows lightly stretching out His arms and says: "*A wish of*

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My Mother is a law for Me. But I will come also for Susannah's and our relatives' sake" (*Poema*, II, 64).

Jesus goes with Jude Thaddeus and John. He says with a smile: "Let us go and make My mother happy" (*Poema*, II, 67). Upon His arrival, the master of the house and His Mother welcome Him joyfully. He enters the feast hall and sits down at the table of honour, with the groom and the bride, their parents and chosen friends. Mary is the only other woman sitting at this table. She is sitting by the bride, across the table from Jesus. She is sustaining Herself not so much with the fine foods as with contemplating Jesus.

Mary notices that the servants are talking in low voices to the steward, who looks very embarrassed and She understands what the cause of the unpleasant situation is. "Son," She whispers in a low voice, thus drawing Jesus' attention. "Son, they have no more wine."

"Woman, what is there still[118] between Me and You?" Jesus, when saying these words, smiles even more gently, and Mary smiles too, like two people aware of some truth which is their joyful secret and is ignored by everyone else.

. . . Mary says to the servants: "Do what He will tell you." In the smiling eyes of Her Son, Mary has read His consent, veiled by the great teaching to all those "who are called."

And Jesus says to the servants: "Fill the jars with water." [They do as they are told.]

. . . Mary looks at Her Son once again, and smiles; then having received a smile from Him, She bows Her head, blushing slightly. She is happy.

A murmur spreads throughout the hall, they all turn their heads towards Jesus and Mary, some stand up to get a better view, some go near the jars. Then a moment's silence, which is immediately broken by an outburst of praises for Jesus.

He stands up and simply says: "Thank Mary" and withdraws from the banquet (*Poema*, II, 74-75).

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118. The presence of this most significant word ("più" in Italian) is explained later during the same vision. See p.31, section d); and note 119 on p.212. [Editor.]

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Jesus gave the Seer a few explanations about this episode.

"When I said to the disciples: 'Let us go and make My Mother happy,' I had given the sentence a deeper meaning than it seemed. I did not mean the happiness of seeing Me, *but the joy of being the initiatress of My miraculous activity and the first benefactress of mankind.*

"Always remember that. *My first miracle happened because of Mary.* The very first one. *It is a symbol that Mary is the key to miracles. I never refuse My Mother anything and because of Her prayer I bring forward also the time of grace.* I know My Mother, *the second in goodness after God.* I know that to grant you a grace is to make Her happy, because She is All Love. That is why I said, knowing Her: 'Let us go and make Her happy.'

"Besides, I wanted to make Her power known to the world, together with Mine. Since She was destined to be joined to Me in the flesh, it was fair She should be joined to Me in the power that is shown to the world. Because we were one flesh: I in Her, She around Me, like the petals of a lily round its scented lively pistil; and *She was united to Me in sorrow: because we were both on the cross, I with My body. She with Her soul,* as a lily is scented because of its corolla and because of the essence extracted from it.

"I say to you what I said to the guests: 'Thank Mary. *It is through Her that you had with you the Master of the miracle and you have My graces, particularly those of forgiveness'"* (*Poema,* II, 77)[119]

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119. The Gospel narrative of the wedding at Cana has been called an enigma. Actually, it contains four enigmas: 1) the use of the word "woman" instead of "Mother"; 2) the expression "what is that to Me and to You?" [Douay]; 3) the words: "My hour is not yet come" [Douay]; 4) the Mother's order to the servants: "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do" [Douay]. These four enigmas are satisfactorily explained by Maria Valtorta's narrative (see *Poema,* II, 74-75).

The first enigma (the use of "woman" instead of "Mother"). (Jesus speaking.) *"From the moment My [messianic] mission started, I was no longer the Son submissive to My Mother, but I was the Servant of God."* Consequently, Jesus' moral ties with His Mother were broken, or better yet, *"had turned into higher bonds, all of a spiritual nature."* In His mind, Jesus always called Mary His Mother. His lips, however, were to utter "Woman," because She was the new Eve to be associated to the new Adam for the salvation of the world (Gen 3:15).

The second enigma (the expression "What is there between You and Me?" which is here completed with one word: "What is there *still* between Me and You?"). Jesus gave an explanation to the Seer:

"That *'still,'* which is omitted by many translators, is the keyword of the sentence

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Jesus explains why He performed His first miracle upon His Mother's request. A few days after the miracle in Cana, Jesus and His disciples were in Jerusalem for the Passover. Jesus healed Simon the Leper, called the Zealot. Andrew looked at Him and said:

"I would like to ask one thing. . ."

"What, Andrew?"

"John told me about the miracle You worked at Cana. . . We were hoping so much that You would work one at Capernaum. . . and You said that You would not work any miracles before fulfilling the Law. Why Cana then? And why here [in Jerusalem] and not in Your own fatherland?" (*Poema*, II, 89).

Jesus replied that as a "son of the Law" — for thus He was known at this time — He had to give a good example by observing the Law. "And what about Cana?" Andrew asked for the second time. At that, Jesus stressed His Mother's mediation:

"Cana was to make My Mother happy. Cana is the advance due to My Mother. She anticipates Grace. Here [in Jerusalem] I honour the Holy City, making her, in public, the starting point of My power as Messiah. But there, at Cana, I paid honour to the Holy Mother of God, Full of Grace. The world received Me through Her. It is only fair that My first miracle in the world should be for Her" (*Poema*, II, 89-90).

---

and explains its true meaning. . .. 'Before I was Yours, only Yours. You gave Me orders, and I obeyed You. I was 'subject' to You. *Now I belong to My mission.* . .. You were everything for Me, Mother, as long as I was only Jesus of Mary of Nazareth, and You are everything in My spirit; but since I became the expected Messiah, I belong to My Father. Wait for a little while and once My mission is over, I will be, once again, *entirely* Yours. [That is why even on the cross, when His mission climaxes, He will call Her again 'Woman' instead of 'Mother.'] . . . But now I belong to all these men. And I belong to the Father, Who sent Me to them'" (*Poema*, II, 76).

The third enigma (Jesus' words: "My hour is not yet come" [Douay]). (Jesus speaking.) "*Because of [Mary's] prayer I bring forward also the time of grace*" (*Poema*, II, 77). The hour that is not yet come is, therefore, the time of grace, the time of miracles, which was anticipated by Mary's prayer.

The fourth enigma (Mary's orders to the servants, after Jesus' answer). Valtorta writes: "Jesus . . . *smiles* even more gently, and Mary smiles too, like two people aware of some truth which is their joyful secret and is ignored by everyone else." Mary read Jesus' assent in His smiling gaze.

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Thus far I have illustrated the biblical foundation for Mary's association with Christ in dispensing all graces. Let us now move on to a brief illustration of the dogmatic foundation.

The Dogmatic Foundation

Mary's dispensing of all graces is founded foremost on Her Motherhood, as Mother of Christ and Mother of Christians. Other factors are Her total dedication to Jesus and Her unique holiness.

The first foundation: *Mary is Christ's Mother.* What belongs to the Son also belongs to the Mother. The Son's treasures of graces are Mary's also. That is why Jesus called Her His Treasurer (*Poema*, IX, 303).

"For Her Immaculate Heart, which was never stained, even by the slightest stain, I open the treasures of Heaven" (*Poema*, X, 357).

The second foundation: *Mary is the Mother of all Christians.*

Jesus says: "I gave you a Mother, not only a Father. . . . You have a Mother in Heaven. . . She has a great deal of influence with God because She is the Daughter, Spouse, and Mother of God" (*Quad. '43*, p.416 [Nov. 8]).

Jesus says: "With Me is Mary, *the Mother of all*, [therefore,] the Help of all. *She* smiled at martyrs to urge them on to Heaven. *She* smiled at virgins to help them in their angelic vocation. *She* smiled at the guilty to draw them to repentance. *She* is always needed by humans, especially when they experience the most acute distress. On *Her* Motherly bosom you will be strengthened and you will find Me and My forgiveness, and along with forgiveness, strength. If you remain in Me, you will enjoy the gifts of Christ and will not experience perdition" (*Quad. '43*, p.318-319 [July 27]).

Being the *Mother of all*, Mary is the *Wet-nurse of all*: to whomever has supernatural life (habitual grace), She gives the sustenance of actual graces.

"See, Mother?" [Jesus is speaking to Mary]. "The world is here.

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The world of the future in the little pure Israelite [Marziam] who will not even be aware of becoming the 'Christian'; the world, the old world of Israel in [Simon] the Zealot; mankind in John [of Endor], the Gentiles in {Syntika}. And they all come to You, *the Holy {Wet-Nurse}* Who gives the milk of Wisdom and Life to the world and to centuries. How many mouths have desired to suckle at Your breast! And how many will do so in future! Patriarchs and Prophets longed for You, because the Nourishment of man was to come from Your fertile womb. And 'My followers' will seek You to be forgiven, taught, defended, loved, like as many [Marziams]. And blessed are those who will do so! Because it will not be possible to persevere in Christ, unless grace is fortified by Your help, Mother full of Grace" (*Poema,* IV, 1186).

iii) *The Mode of Mary's Association with Jesus in Dispensing All Graces*

All Catholic theologians consider that Mary's influence in distributing all graces is of a *moral* nature. She operates by means of Her prayer and intercession with which She urges *God* to grant graces. Several theologians acknowledge as well a *"physical"* influence by Mary. They see in Her (as in Christ's sacred humanity, from which She is inseparable) an instrument of grace. Thus She joins Christ in *giving* graces to souls, directly dispensing them Herself after obtaining them with Her own intercession.

Valtorta's writings shed light on both of Mary's *moral* and *"physical"* influences in dispensing all graces. As for the "physical" influence, She is shown to be an instrument of God (God being the principal cause), in union with Christ's humanity (the instrumental cause).

The Virgin Mary's Moral Influence

Jesus says: "As children who take refuge under their mother's veil, have recourse to Mary's *prayer.* Mary's *prayer* is a shield against the heat of the senses and of the devil. Mary's *prayer* is the means

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to grow in Christ and enter His Kingdom" (*Quad.* '43, p.416-417 [Nov. 8]).

Elsewhere, Jesus spoke at length about everything God gave us through Mary.

". . . He continues to give you so much on account of Her, at Her request, for Her joy, because Her joy flows into the joy of God and increases it with flashes that fill the light, the great light of Paradise with brilliant sparkles and every sparkle is a grace to the universe, to mankind, to the blessed souls who reply with a jubilant cry of alleluia to each generation of divine miracle, created by the desire of the Blessed Trinity to see the sparkling smile of joy of the Virgin" (*Poema*, I, 30).

Mary speaking:

"*I pray for you.* Remember that. The beatitude of being in Heaven, living in the ray of God, does not cause Me to forget My children who are suffering on the earth. And I pray. And all Heaven prays, because Heaven loves. Heaven is living charity. And Charity has mercy on you. *But even if I were all by Myself, My prayer would be sufficient for the needs of those who hope in God.* Because I never stop praying for you all, for the holy and the wicked, to give joy to the holy, to give repentance to the wicked that they might be saved" (*Poema*, I, 154).

Furthermore, Jesus said that

"the secret of the salvation of the world resides in Mary's prayers" (*Poema*, X, 360).

Mary's moral influence (by Her prayers, urging God to distribute graces) is supplemented by Her "physical" influence (actually *distributing* the graces that She obtained through prayer).

The Virgin Mary's "physical" influence

John the Baptist was granted a signal grace: he was sanctified even before his birth. Now, Mary affirms: "My *presence* had sanctified the Baptist" (*Poema*, I, 153). She did not say Her "intercession," but Her "presence."

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Jesus explains this in Maria Valtorta's *Quaderni*:

"John the Baptist leaped in his mother's womb when he received the stream of *grace flowing from Mary*. This stream was so strong that it sanctified him. It flowed past the barriers of the flesh to reach the fruit of Zechariah and Elizabeth which was growing to become My evangelist. (Since an evangelist spreads the Good News and John spread the Good News of My presence among human beings, I am *not* mistaken in calling John the Baptist My evangelist. I say this for the sake of pettifogging exegetes.) In the same way, those who came in Mary's physical vicinity could not do so without feeling the effects of Her grace.

"She left in Her wake a track of active holiness. If only hearts did not spurn grace and if only they drew near to Her, they became predestined to holiness. When everything is revealed to mankind, you shall see that many of the first disciples of the Son of Mary were people who had had as little as chance meetings with Her. Yet, they remained cleansed and saturated with the grace which She spread. Then you will know about many prodigies done by Her, My Completely Beautiful One, the Full of Grace" (*Quad. '43*, p.592 [Nov. 28]).[120]

120. The Virgin Mary's instrumental physical causality in the distribution of graces was taught by Pius XII in his encyclical *Ad coeli reginam*: "The Blessed Virgin possessed, after Christ, not only the highest degree of excellence, and perfection, but also a share in that influence by which He, Her Son and our Redeemer, is rightly said to reign over the minds and wills of men. For if through His Humanity the divine Word performs miracles and gives graces, if He uses His Sacraments and Saints as instruments for the salvation of men, *why should He not make use of the role and work of His Most Holy Mother in imparting to us the fruits of redemption?. . .*" (*A.A.S.* 46 [1954] p. 636; English translation: Carlen, Claudia, I.H.M., ed. *The Papal Encyclicals, 1740-1981*. Vol. 4, p.276, #42).

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II. MARY'S UNIQUE *FUNCTIONS* IN THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH

The Church is the mystical Body of Christ, His Kingdom, His imitator. Since Mary is Christ's Mother and Associate, She is also the Mother, Queen, and Prototype of the Church. Maria Valtorta's writings illustrate remarkably well these three functions of the Virgin Mary in the Church.

1. Mary, Mother of the Church

a) The *Fact* that Mary is the Mother of the Church.

Before and above all, Mary's function is to be the Mother of the Church (Mother of Christ's mystical Body, or Mother of all Christians).

[Mary says:] "I am the Mother of all My Son's children" (*Quad. '45-50*, p.70 [May 22, 1945]).

Let us glean from Maria Valtorta's works. Mary is "*the Genitrix of grace . . .; the Genitrix of the Universal Church*" (*Quad. '43*, p.310 [Sept. 6]). She is the "Universal Mother of all human beings" (*Poema*, X, 355). She is the Mother who, by Her love and sufferings, "ceaselessly begets children for [Her Son's] Kingdom" (*Quad. '43*, p.310 [Sept. 6]). She is the "Universal Mother" (*Poema*, IV, 688), the "universal Genitrix" (*Azariah*, p.263); "the Mother of mankind who were being born once again to God" (*Poema*, II, 16).

[Mary speaking to Mary of Clopas.] "I am the Mother of all. . . and I must not limit My motherhood to one person alone. I am not even possessive of Jesus. . ." (*Poema*, VI, 995).

Mary says: "The Heart of the Mother of humanity — My heart — is in Heaven and throbs with anxious love for all of you, just

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and sinners alike. Yes, My Heart wants to have all of you with Me in the blessed Fatherland, for ever and ever" (*Poema*, X, 349).

"Holy Mother and Wet-nurse of the human race!" (*Azariah*, p.170).

Jesus entrusts His Church to Mary, as to a Mother. This is taking place in the third year of His Public Ministry. Jesus is in Gamala with the Virgin Mary, the Apostles and the pious women. While the Apostles and the women are resting, Jesus has an intimate conversation with His Mother. After alluding to the hour of His now imminent supreme sacrifice, He cries out:

"None of [the Apostles and the pious women] understands, but that is not their fault. Satan is blowing smoke so they won't see, so they will be drunk and deaf, unprepared. . . and easier to overcome. But You and Me, We will save them despite Satan's traps. Mother, I entrust You with them from now on. Remember My words. I entrust You with them. I am giving You My inheritance.

"I have nothing on earth except My Mother and *My Church.* My Mother, I offer to God: Victim with the Victim; and *My Church, I entrust to You. Be a Wet-nurse to Her.*

"Not very long ago, I was thinking about the many people who, in the centuries to come, will reenact the life of the man of Kerioth with all his faults. I could see that any man but Jesus would reject such a man. I won't reject him: I am Jesus. You will stay on earth for a while. You will come after Peter in the Hierarchy of the Church. He will be the chief and You will be a faithful, but *You are the first among all: You are the Mother of the Church.* That is because You gave birth to Me, the head of that Mystical Body.

"Don't drive away the many Judases, but help them and teach Peter and the brethren . . . not to reject them, but to help them. Defend Me in those who follow Me, and defend Me against those who will try to scatter and dismember the newborn Church.

"In the centuries to come, Mother, always be the one who intercedes and protects, defends, and helps My Church, My priests and My faithful, against evil, against punishment, and against themselves. . . O Mother, You will come across many Judases as centuries go by. Many will be like mentally handicapped people who cannot understand, or like the blind and deaf who cannot see or hear. They will be like the crippled and the paralytic who cannot move about.

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Mother, keep them all under Your cloak. You alone can and will be able to commute the decrees of punishment passed by the Eternal One on any or many of them.[121] This is because *there is nothing that the Triad could ever refuse His Flower."*

[Jesus' Mother replies:] "I will do that, Son. Whatever is up to Me, You can be at peace about. Go ahead and do what You have to do. Your Mother is always here to defend You in Your Church" (*Poema*, VI, 1107-1108).

A graceful episode occurred in the second year of Jesus' Public Ministry, in the populous suburb of Ophel, where His Mother was staying. During a visit to Her, Jesus saw Peter and Mary holding Marziam's hands as they walked away. Jesus smiled gently at the scene. James of Zebedee asked Him why He was smiling, and Jesus answered:

"Because I see a great promise in that group."

"Which promise, Brother? What do You see?" asks [Jude] Thaddeus.

"This is what I see: that I shall be able to go away with a peaceful mind, when the time comes. I need not be afraid for My Church. Then it will be small and slender like Marziam. But My Mother will be there to hold it by the hand and to be its Mother; and there will be Peter as its father. In his honest rough hands I can place the hand of My dawning Church without any worry. He will give it the strength of his protection. My Mother the strength of Her love. And the Church will grow... like Marziam... He is really the symbol-child! May God bless My Mother, My Peter and their child and ours!" (*Poema*, III, 396-397).

b) The *Nature* of Mary's Spiritual Motherhood

"A mother is the one who gives life" (*Lezioni sull'Epistola di Paolo ai Romani* [A Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans], p.96).

The life which the Virgin Mary gives is not natural life,

121. These, of course, are not absolute sentences. God has decreed from all eternity that they were to be subject to Mary's intervention.

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but the supernatural life of divine grace, the new life. This new life began with Mary.

[Jesus says:] "For humanity as a whole as well as for individuals, the new life begins with Mary" (*Poema,* IX, 309).

"Like the old Eve, the new Eve (Mary) received from God another son to replace 'Abel whom Cain slew' [Gen 4:25-26; Douay]. She did not receive him during an hour of brutal pleasure that would stun Her pain . . . . She received him during a time of *total suffering,* at the foot of gallows, hearing Her Son's death rattles among the curses of a deicidal crowd. She was radically, totally desolate, because God Himself no longer comforted Her" (*ibid.,* 308-309).

The Most Divine Author — the Holy Spirit — says:

"Mary is your Mother. This is no mere symbol: this is *real,* because a mother is *the one who gives life,* and Mary gave you Life. It follows that She gave you the Holy Spirit, the One who sustains Life in you. What is more, He makes of you Christ-bearers and even *other Christs,* according to this sentence of Paul's: 'I live, now not I; but Christ lives in me' [Gal.2:20].

The Holy Spirit moves on to explain this sentence and follows with an example.

"The lesser person is outshined by the greater person and is absorbed by Him; the greater dominates and shines forth, overwhelming the lesser; not to crush the lesser and abuse it, but to take it to a higher stage. The greater takes charge of the lesser, and draws inadequacy closer to plenitude; weakness, closer to strength; narrowness, closer to infinity.

"Let us suppose that a king would find a poor, naked child on the road and take him on his throne right beside him. Let us suppose that he would love him so much that he would make him his heir, and that he would cover him with his royal mantle to have the crowds acclaim him. The crowds could not laugh at this poor little child because they could not see him. They could see but the king sitting in his majesty. The little child would happily snuggle right next to the good king and would disappear in the rich royal garments. That would be the most precise symbol of a Christian who has become another Christ.

"This is precisely the case with Mary. She, a creature, was pregnant with God and felt reduced to nothing by the Infinite enclosed

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in Her womb. She no longer was the one acting, but the One Who was in Her saw Her, and carried Her, and gave Her to humanity to venerate.

"In you too, Christians, the Spirit sows the seed of Christ. If your will collaborates with Love's will, Christ shall come to life in you and you shall become united with Him so as to be 'one single thing' with the Father and the Son, and the Spirit Who unites Them. This is what Jesus asked for when He prayed at the Last Supper, so that you may obtain an eternal dwelling with the Three Who are but One. Jesus prayed for you to enjoy God's love, glory, and joyful peace. Joyful peace is the reward of those who have welcomed God's word and His light, and who have lived in truth and charity. Peace is the reward of those who have been born of God and who have borne testimony to Christ, who was living in them, witnessing by their perfect life according to Jesus' commandment and example" (*Lezioni sull'Epistola di Paolo ai Romani* [A Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans], p.96-97).

[Extract from Maria Valtorta's correspondence.] "Let us become little in Mary. Let us become little children again, nay *embryos* of little children. Let the Mother of Grace take us back to the light. We shall thus be regenerated, true children of God and brothers of Jesus. Let our embryo be shaped again in Mary, and let us *die* to ourselves, to the world, to the past, and to Satan. Once we have done that, She will deposit Jesus in the bottom of our embryo, and we shall be real bearers of Jesus. . . .

"Jesus said: 'If you become like little children, you shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.' The way of spiritual childhood under the direction of Mary seems even easier. This consists of our self-annihilation in Mary, and being taught by Her. Someone (St. Thérèse de Lisieux) was able to follow Christ's way, but we, poor creatures, are not as capable. . . . Therefore, it is not up to us to wish to enter Heaven like courageous little children who can walk by themselves. Let us, instead, entrust our childhood to the Mother, and She will carry us on Her bosom, on Her heart and will feed us the milk. . . of Her love. That is the *communion of love with Mary and in Mary*. In Her is found God in His entirety: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. . ." (Letter to Mother Teresa Maria, 1949.)

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c) The *Foundation* for Mary's Spiritual Motherhood

It is both biblical and theological.

i) *The Biblical Foundation*

The foundation for Mary's spiritual motherhood was proclaimed by Jesus on the cross (Jn 19: 25-27); and by John in the Book of Revelation (12:17).

The Proclamation of Mary's Spiritual Motherhood

In various places, Maria Valtorta writes about this solemn proclamation. Already, by the end of the third year of His Public Ministry, Jesus recommended His beloved Mother to John.

"John, I ask you from now on to devote your energy to the women disciples unremittingly, especially My Mother..."

"My Lord!" [John exclaims]. "What can I give Your Mother that She doesn't already have superabundantly? She has so much that She could give some to all of us!"

"Your love. See to it that She love you as another son. She loves you; so you, love Her. You both have a single love that unites you: your love for Me. I am Her Son according to the flesh and through the heart, but I will be more and more... absent, taken up in My... occupations. She will grieve, because She knows... She knows what is to happen. You *have* to comfort Her for Me. You must become such a friend to Her that She can weep on your heart and feel comforted. My Mother is no stranger to you. You have already spent time with Her. But it is one thing to do it as a disciple who reverently loves his Master's Mother, and another to spend time with Her *as a son*. I want you to be *as a son* to Her so that She might grieve a little less when She does not have Me anymore."

[Moments later, Jesus says:] "In a little while I will die. My Mother will be alone. When I die, there will be a drop of sweetness in the ocean of My suffering if I see you are a 'son' to My Mother..."

[John cries out:] "Oh! My Lord! If I can, yes, I'll do it. I will

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look after Her with a son's heart, but if She loses You, what can I give Her to comfort Her? What can I give Her then if I'm like someone who lost everything, if I'm beside myself with grief?. . ."

"Don't get upset. For now, don't stop praying. I will keep you with Me and My Mother for a long time. John, you are Our peace, and you are still going to be Our peace then. Don't be afraid, John. Your love will do everything."

"Oh! yes, Lord! Keep me with You for a long time. You know, I don't want to show off or perform miracles. All I want, all I can do is love. . ."

Jesus again kisses him on the forehead, near the temple. . ." (*Poema*, VII, 1852-1854).

"All I can do is love. . ." Because of that, Jesus, on Calvary, presents John to the world as the model of Mary's children. The words which Jesus addressed to John from the cross: "This is your Mother," go beyond John's person and apply to all of Christ's disciples (the members of His Mystical Body). That that was Christ's intention is manifest in the following. Jesus is addressing all of us in His dictation to Maria Valtorta.

"[From My pulpit, the cross,] I taught you Who you [must] go to so that you will not be lonely: Mary, Who is your Mother" (*Quad. '43*, p.457 [Oct. 16]).

The words addressed to Saint John, therefore, were addressed also to all of us. Through his unique filial love for Mary, John was the prototype of Her children.

In another passage, after maintaining that "a father's love is not completely the same" as a mother's love, Jesus dictated the following.

"Next to God's love, a mother's love is *the greatest of loves.* That is why *on the cross, I gave you all to My dear Mother.* I did not entrust you to the Father, [even though] I was dying in order to redeem you [from sin and death to reconcile you with Him]. I gave you to the Mother because you were misshapen newborns and you needed a mother's breast. . ." (*Quad. '43*, p.10 [May 28]).

That is why in her *[Petition to Our Lady of Sorrows]* the Seer exclaimed:

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"Mary, You have taken us as Your children at the foot of the cross. Mary, You are our Mother and the Mother of our God and brother Jesus. Listen to Your children's voice!"[122] (*Quad. '43,* p.27 [June 5]).

Mary's Spiritual Motherhood in the Book of Revelation

In her (incomplete) commentary on the Book of Revelation, Maria Valtorta wrote the following about chapter 12, verse 1.

"A few days ago" [July 21 and 22], "Jesus said something similar in a comment that He made on the spiritual motherhood of Mary, who appeared as the Woman clothed with the sun" (*Quad. '43,* p.261 [July 23]).

In chapter 12 of Revelation, Saint John says that the infernal dragon first opposed, to no avail, the Woman's *"man-Child"* (Christ [verse 5; Douay]). The dragon, "that old serpent" [verse 9; Douay], then pursued the Woman, but God rescued Her [verses 13-16]. Finally the dragon "went to make war with *the rest of her seed [children],* who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ": the Christians (verse 17 [Douay]). Therefore, both Christ and Christians are the Woman's children. Christ is Mary's Son in a bodily way; Christians are Her children in a spiritual, mystical way, since they are members of the mystical Body which is the Church and whose Head is Christ. The very fact that the Blessed Virgin was Christ's Mother physically and that Christ is the Head of regenerated humanity, implies that Mary is also the Mother of the members of this same Body, the

122. Paul VI, in his apostolic exhortation *Signum Magnum,* stated that Jesus "designated Her [the BVM] the mother not only of John the Apostle but also — it seems legitimate to say this — of the human race, which he somehow represented." (A.A.S., 59 [1967], 467-468; English translation in *The Pope Speaks. The Church Documents Quarterly.* Vol. 12 (1967), p. 280).

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Church, in a spiritual way. She is the Mother of the entire Christ, Head and Body.[123]

That is the biblical foundation for Mary's spiritual motherhood.

ii) *The Theological Foundation*

Between Christ, the head, and Christians, His members, there is a mystical identity of being. Thus the entire Christ (Head and members, Christ and Christians) may and must be said to be the one and only Son of Mary. Such is the theological foundation for Mary's spiritual motherhood.

On the strength of such an identity, Christians (the members) were spiritually *conceived* by the Blessed Virgin at the same instant as Christ (their Head). They were mystically carried in the Virgin's womb at the same time as Christ (their Head). They were mystically born of the Virgin Mary when She gave birth to Christ (their Head), and were mystically nourished by Her when She bodily fed Christ (their Head). Christ's influence on Christians (His members) was completed at the moment of His redemptive sacrifice on Calvary. That is when He eliminated the obstacle of sin and, with Mary, obtained grace for them.

Maria Valtorta's writings explain this tersely. Jesus is speaking to His Mother.

"[You are] the first among all: You are the Mother of the Church. That is because You gave birth to Me, the Head of that Mystical Body . . ." (*Poema*, VI, 1108)

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123. This conclusion is confirmed by Paul VI's apostolic exhortation, *Signum magnum*: "*A 'great sign'* appeared in the heavens over St. John the Apostle; it was 'a Woman clothed with the sun' [Rev 12:1]. The sacred Liturgy of the Catholic Church [See Epistle for the feast of Mary's Lourdes apparition, Feb. 11], *not without reason*, interprets this sign as being the Blessed Virgin Mary who, by the grace of Christ the Redeemer, is *the Mother of all men.*" (A.A.S., 59 [1967], p. 465; English Translation: in *The Pope Speaks. The Church Documents Quarterly.* Vol. 12 [1967], p. 278; the emphasis is Fr. Roschini's).

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d) The *Consequences* of Mary's Spiritual Motherhood

The Virgin Mary, to all Her children, is a Mother at once incomparable, unique, ideal and real. Of Her, Peter the Apostle said

"There is a Mother here that not even Heaven has a sweeter one" (*Poema*, II, 395).

As we glean beautiful passages in Valtorta's writings, let us remember some of Mary's better known titles: "Mother of Mercy," "Refuge of sinners," "Mother of Good Counsel," "Health of the Sick," "Mother of Orphans," "Comfort of the Afflicted". . .

i) "*Mother of Mercy*"

The dominant note in Mary's maternal heart is mercy.

[Mary Salome speaking to the Virgin Mary.] "You would always forgive. You're so good! But there has to be justice, too!"

"Yes," Mary of Magdala says, "there has to be justice, too, but it's a good thing for us that mercy is even greater." . . .

Johanna answers: "You can say that again, but Mary. . ."

"Mary wants nothing but forgiveness, even if She does not need it for Herself," Susannah says. "Isn't that true, Mary?"

[Mary answers:] "I would like nothing but forgiveness. Yes. Nothing else. To be wicked must be such horrible suffering to begin with. . ." She sighs as She speaks.

"You would forgive everyone? really everyone? Would it be fair to do that? Some are stubborn and keep doing evil. They waste every act of forgiveness bestowed on them. They laugh at it. They think it's a sign of weakness," Martha says.

"I would still forgive," [Mary answers]. "As far as I am concerned, I would forgive. That is not foolish. I would forgive because I see every soul as a little child that is more or less good. *Yes, as a child. . . A mother always forgives. . .* even when she says: 'Justice wants a fair punishment.' Oh! if a mother could die so as to bring to life a new, good heart in her evil child's bosom, you think she wouldn't do it? It is not possible, though. Some hearts refuse every kind of help. . . I think pity must grant forgiveness even to those.

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They already carry such a burden in their hearts: their sin, and God's severity. . . Oh! Let's forgive those who are guilty, let's forgive. . . May God deign to welcome our absolute forgiveness to diminish their debt. . ." (*Poema*, VIII, 336-337).

At the end of *Il Poema dell'Uomo Dio*, Mary is fittingly called "the martyr of forgiveness," since She generously forgave *everybody's* faults, even Judas', who betrayed Her divine Son.

In connection with this, we could underline the Virgin's reply to Susannah, whose following words show little compassion:

"When I see an unfortunate child I say: 'Luckily for me I have none!'"

"Do not say so, Susannah! It is not charitable. I also could say so because My only Maternity is beyond natural laws. But I do not say that, because I always think: 'If God had not wanted Me to be a virgin, that seed might have fallen on Me, and I would the mother of the unhappy child,' and thus I pity them all. . . Because I say: 'He might have been My son' and as a mother I would like all children to be good, healthy, loved and loving, because every mother wishes that for her own children" replies Mary kindly. And Jesus seems to envelop Her in light, so radiantly He looks at Her.

"That is why You pity me. . ." says the Iscariot in a low voice.

"I pity everybody. Even if one were the murderer of My Son. Because I think that he would be the most in need of help. . . and love. Because the whole world would certainly hate him."

"{Woman}, You would have to work hard defending him to give him time to repent. . . I would get rid of him immediately. . ." says Peter. (*Poema*, IV, 882).

ii) "*Refuge of sinners*"

The Blessed Virgin's enlightened mercy made Her the most natural, most obvious *refuge of sinners*. One day, Jesus spoke to a group of women. At one point He recalled His recent conversation with His Mother about a young girl of great virtue. He said: "Yesterday eve-

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ning . . . My Mother said to Me . . . : 'How lovely it is to be the Redeemer's Mother!' " He then went on to address Mary.

"Yes, how lovely it is when the creature coming to the Redeemer is already a creature of God, a creature in whom there is only the stain of origin, that can only be washed away by Me. All the other small stains of human imperfection have been washed away by love.

"But, My Sweet Mother, Most Pure Guide of souls to Your Son, Holy Star of orientation, Kind Teacher of saints, Pious Foster-Mother of the most little ones, Healthy Cure of sick people, not always such creatures who are not repugnant to holiness will be coming to You... But lepers, horrors, stench, a tangle of snakes and foul things, will creep to Your feet, o Queen of mankind, and will shout: 'Have mercy! Succour us! Take us to Your Son!' And You will have to put this pure hand of Yours on their wounds, and bend with Your eyes of a heavenly dove on hellish deformities, inhale the stench of sin and not run away. Nay, You will have to press to Your heart those who have been mutilated by Satan, those {runts}, that filth, and wash them with Your tears and bring them to Me... And then You will say: 'How difficult it is to be the Redeemer's Mother!' But You will do it because You are the Mother... I kiss and bless these hands of Yours from which so many creatures will come to Me, and each of them will be a glory of Mine. But before Mine, *it will be a glory of Yours,* holy Mother" (*Poema,* III, p.84).

At this point, we should see the impressive finesse and motherly gentleness with which the Blessed Virgin welcomed, in Nazareth, a former prostitute from Syracuse by the name of Aglae. She came one evening to Mary and said:

". . . I need Piety to open Her arms to me. And You are Piety..." and she weeps.

"Come in, then... And tell Me... You have said enough to make Me understand that you are unhappy... But I do not yet know who you are. Your name, sister..."

"Oh! no! Not sister! I cannot be Your sister... You are the Mother of Good... I... I am Evil..." and she cries louder and louder under her mantle, which covers her completely.

Mary lays the lamp on a chair; She takes the hand of the

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unknown woman kneeling on the threshold and compels her to stand up.

Mary does not know her. . . but I do [Maria Valtorta says]. She is the Veiled woman of the Clear Water.

She stands up, dejected, trembling, shaken by her sobs, and is still reluctant to go in. She says: "I am a heathen, my Lady. I am filth, for you Jews, even if I were holy. I am twice filth because I am a prostitute."

"If you come to Me, if you look for My Son through Me, you can only be a repentant heart. This house welcomes those whose name is Sorrow" and She leads her in, closing the door, lays the lamp on the table, and asks her to sit down and says: "Speak."

But the veiled woman does not want to sit down; still stooping, she continues to weep. Mary is in front of her, kind and queenly. She waits, praying, for her to calm down. Her whole attitude tells me that She is praying, although nothing about Her takes the form of prayer: neither Her hands which are holding all the time the little hand of the Veiled woman, nor Her lips which are closed.

At last her weeping calms down. The Veiled woman dries her face with her veil and then says: "And yet I have not come from so far as to be unknown. It is the hour of my redemption and I must reveal myself. . . to show with how many wounds my heart is covered. And You are a Mother. . . and His Mother. . . You will, therefore, have mercy on me."

"Yes, My daughter."

"Oh! yes! Call me daughter! I had a mother. . . and I left her. . . I was later told that she died of a broken heart. . . I had a father. . . he cursed me. . . and he says to those in town: 'I no longer have a daughter'". . . (She resumes crying more bitterly. Mary turns pale with anguish, but lays Her hand on her head to comfort her). The Veiled woman goes on: "No one will call me daughter any more!. . . Yes, caress me thus, as my mother used to do when I was pure and good. . . Let me kiss Your hand and wipe my tears with it. My tears alone will not cleanse me. How much have I wept when I realized!. . . Also before I used to weep, because it is horrible to be nothing but flesh, abused and insulted by man. But they were the tears of an ill-treated animal that hates and rebels against him who tortures and fouls it more and more. . . because I changed master, but I did not change bestiality. . . I have been weeping for eight months. . . because I have understood. . . I understood my misery

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and my depravity, I am covered and saturated with it and I feel disgusted. . . But my tears, although more and more conscious, do not yet cleanse me. They mix with my depravity and do not wash it away. Oh! Mother! Wipe my tears and I shall be so cleansed as to be able to go near my Saviour!"

"Yes, My daughter, yes, I will. Sit down. Here, near Me. And speak calmly. Leave your burden here, on My knees of a Mother" and Mary sits down.

But the Veiled woman sinks to the ground at Her feet, as she wishes to speak to Her thus. She begins slowly: "I come from Syracuse. . . I am twenty-six years old. . . I was the daughter of a steward, as you would call him, we say a procurator, of a wealthy Roman gentleman. I was an only daughter. My life was a happy one. We lived near the seaside, in a beautiful villa, where my father was the steward. Now and again the owner of the villa, or his wife or children would come. They treated us very well and were very good to me. The girls used to play with me. . . My mother was happy and. . . proud of me. I was beautiful. . . intelligent and I succeeded in everything. . . But I loved frivolous things more than good things.

"There is a great theater at Syracuse. A great theater. Beautiful. . . huge. . . It is used for games and plays. . . Mimers are widely employed in the comedies and tragedies which are performed there. They emphasize the meaning of the chorus by their silent dances. . . ."

The Veiled woman speaks, remembers, sees and dreams of her past and weeps. Her sobs are like commas in her speech.[124]

. . . "I studied [a] dance [I saw at the theater]. . . and one day. . . one day. . ." The Veiled woman cries louder. . . She then composes herself. "I was beautiful. I still am. Look." She stands up throwing her veil behind her and letting her large mantle drop. . . .

She kneels down again in front of Mary. "I was beautiful, unfortunately. And I was crazy. On that day I put on veils, the daughters of our landlord helped me as they loved to see me dance. . . . . I put on a wreath of roses picked in the garden. . . and I danced. I

124. "The following description, though explicit and detailed, is neither unbecoming nor vulgar. It is done with dignity, and the disapproval of the reported facts is shown by the repulsion and pain Aglae feels talking about them and the Virgin Mary, hearing them." (Such was Fr. Berti's comment in the Italian critical edition, Vol. III, p.152, note 1.)

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was enraptured by the light, the scents, by the pleasure of being young, agile and beautiful. I danced. . . and I was noticed. I saw I was being looked at. But I was not ashamed of appearing nude in the presence of two greedy eyes of a man. On the contrary, I took pleasure in dancing {in greater leaps}. The satisfaction of being admired lent wings to my feet. And it was my ruin. Three days later I was left all by myself because the landlords left to go back to their patrician dwelling in Rome. But I did not stay at home. . . The two admiring eyes had revealed something else to me, beyond dancing. . . They had revealed sensuality and sex."

Mary makes an involuntary gesture of disgust, which is noted by Aglae. "Oh! but You are pure! Perhaps I disgust You. . ."

"Speak, My daughter. It is better if you speak to Mary than to Him. Mary is a *sea that washes*. . ."

"Yes, it is better if I tell You. I thought that myself when I heard that He had a Mother. . . Because before, seeing Him so different from every other man, the only thoroughly spiritual man — now I know there is the spirit and what it is — before I could not have said of what Your Son was made, as He was without sensuality although a man, and within myself I thought He had no mother, but He had descended upon the earth to save the horrible wretches of whom I am the worst.

"Every day I went back to that place hoping to see the young handsome swarthy man. . . And after some time I saw him again. . . He spoke to me. He said to me: 'Come to Rome with me. I will take you to the imperial court, you will be the pearl of Rome.' I replied: 'Yes. I will be your faithful wife. Come and see my father.' He laughed mockingly and kissed me. He said: 'Not my wife! But you shall be the goddess and I your priest and I will reveal the secrets of life and pleasure to you.' I was thoroughly infatuated, I was a young girl. But although a young girl, I knew what life is. . . I was shrewd, I was infatuated, but not yet depraved. . . and I was disgusted by his proposal. I tore myself away from his embrace and I ran home. . . But I did not speak to my mother about it. . . and I did not resist the desire to see him again. . . His kisses had made me more enthralled than ever. . . And I went back. . . I had hardly reached the deserted beach when he embraced me kissing me frenziedly, with a storm of kisses, with loving words, with questions: 'Is there not everything in this love? Is this not sweeter than a bond? What else do you want? Can you live without this?'

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"Oh! Mother. . . I eloped the same evening with the filthy patrician. . . and I became a rag trampled on by his beastliness. . . I was not a goddess: but mud. Not a pearl: but trash. Life was not revealed to me, but the filth of life, the infamy, the disgust, the pain, the shame, the infinite misery of not even belonging to myself. . . And then. . . utter ruin. After six months of orgies, he became tired of me and passed on to fresh love affairs and I lived on the streets. I made the most of my dancing talent. . . I already knew that my mother had died of a broken heart and that I no longer had a home or a father. . . A dancing master accepted me in his academy. He perfected me. . . he enjoyed me. . . and he launched me into the corrupt Roman patriciate as a flower fully skilled in every sensual art. The already dirty flower fell into a cloaca. For ten years I fell lower and lower into the abyss. I was then brought here to delight Herod's leisure time and I was engaged here by a new master. Oh! No chained dog is more chained than one of us! And there is no dog trainer more brutal than the man who possesses a woman! Mother. . . You are trembling! I am filling You with horror!"

Mary has taken Her hand to Her heart, as if it had been wounded. But She replies: "No, not you. The Evil, which is such a powerful master on the earth, is horrifying Me. Go on, My poor creature."

"He took me to Hebron. . . Was I free? Was I rich? Yes, I was, because I was not in jail and I was covered with jewels. No, I was not, because I could see only those whom he wanted and I had no right to myself.

"One day a man, the 'Man,' Your Son, came to Hebron. The house was dear to Him. I realized it and I invited Him to enter. Shammai was not there. . . and from the window I had already heard words and seen a sight which had upset my heart. But I swear to You, Mother, that it was not the flesh that drove me towards Your Jesus. It was something that He revealed to me that drove me to the door, defying the quips of the populace, to say to Him: 'Come in.' It was the soul that I then learned I had. He said to me: 'My name means: Saviour. I save those who are anxious to be saved. I save by teaching to be pure, to desire and accept sorrows with honour, to desire Good at all costs. I am the One Who seeks those who are lost and gives Life. I am Purity and Truth!' He told me that I also had a soul and that I had killed it by my way of living. But He did not curse me, neither did He mock me. And He never

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looked at me! The first man who did not strip me with his greedy eyes, because I lie under the terrible curse of attracting men. . . He told me that who looks for Him will find Him because He is where a doctor and a medicine are needed. And He went away. But His words were in here. And they have never come out. I used to say to myself: 'His name means Saviour,' as if I were beginning to wish to be cured. I was left with His words and with His friends, the shepherds. And I took the first step by giving them alms and asking for their prayers. . . And then. . . I ran away. . .

"Oh! It was a holy flight! I ran away from sin seeking the Saviour. I went about looking for Him. I was sure I would find Him because He had promised me. They sent me to a man whose name is John, thinking it was He. But it was not. A Jew sent me to the Clear Water. I lived selling the large quantity of gold I had. During the months when I wandered about I had to keep my face covered to avoid begin captured and also because, really, Aglae was buried under that veil. The old Aglae was dead. Under the veil there was her wounded bloodless soul seeking its doctor. Many a time I was compelled to flee the sensuality of men who persecuted me, although I was so disguised in my attire. Also one of the friends of Your Son. . . [Judas Iscariot].

"At the Clear Water I lived like an animal: poor but happy. And the dew and the river did not clean me as much as His words. Oh! Not one was lost! Once He forgave a murderer. I heard. . . and I was about to say: 'Forgive me, too.' Another time He spoke of lost innocence. . . Oh! How many tears of regret! Another time He cured a leper. . . and I was about to shout: 'Cleanse me too, of my sin. . .' Another time He cured a madman, a Roman. . . and I wept. . . and He got someone to tell me that fatherlands pass away, but Heaven remains. One stormy night He sheltered me in His house. . . and later He asked the steward to give me hospitality and He told a child to say to me: 'Do not weep'. . . Oh! His kindness! My misery! Both so great that I did not dare to take my misery to His feet. . . notwithstanding that one of His disciples during the night instructed me in the infinite mercy of Your Son. And then, when those who considered sinful the desire of a soul to be reborn, laid snares for Him, my Saviour went away. . . and I waited for Him. . . But He was awaited also by the vengeance of those who are by far less worthy of looking at Him than I am. Because I, as a heathen, sinned against myself, whereas they, who already knew God, sin against the Son of

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God. . . and they hit me and they have hurt me more with their accusations than with stones and they have wounded my soul more than my body, as they led me to despair.

"Oh! What a dreadful struggle against myself! Worn out, bleeding, wounded, feverish, without my Doctor, homeless, without food, I looked behind me and in front of me. . . My past would say to me: 'Come back,' my present said: 'Kill yourself,' my future used to say: 'Hope.' I did hope. . . I did not commit suicide. I would, if He rejected me, because I do not want to be what I was!. . . I dragged myself to a village asking for shelter. . . But they recognized me. Like an animal I had to run away, here, there, always chased, always scorned at, always cursed, because I wanted to be honest and because I had disappointed those who, through me, wanted to strike Your Son. Following the [Jordan] River I came up to Galilee and I came here. . . You were not here. . . I went to Capernaum. You had just left. But an old man saw me. One of His enemies, who wanted me to bear witness against Your Son, and as I was weeping without reacting, he said to me: 'Everything could change in your favour if you would become my lover and my accomplice in accusing the Rabbi of Nazareth. It is enough for you to say in the presence of my friends, that He was your lover. . .' I ran away like a person who sees a snake creep out of a flowery bush.

"I thus understood that I can no longer go to Him. . . and I came to You. Here I am: tread on me, for I am mud. Here I am: reject me, for I am a sinner. Here I am: call me by my name: prostitute. I will accept anything from You. But, Mother, have mercy on me. Take my poor soiled soul and take it to Him. It is a crime to put my lust into Your hands. But only there it will be protected from the world that wants it and it will become penance. Tell me how I must behave. Tell me what I have to do. Tell me which means I must use to be no longer Aglae. What must I mutilate in myself? What must I tear away from myself that I may no longer be sin, or an allurement, that I may no longer have to be afraid of myself and of men? Shall I put out my eyes? Or burn my lips? Or cut my tongue? My eyes, lips and tongue have served me in evil deeds. I no longer want evil and I am willing to punish myself and them by sacrificing them. Or shall I tear off these greedy loins which have driven me to perverted love? Or these unappeasable viscera which I am afraid may be aroused afresh? Tell me, please tell me how can a woman forget she is a female and how can she make other people forget!"

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Mary is upset. She weeps and suffers, but the only signs of Her grief are the tears that fall on the repentant woman.

"I want to die only after I have been forgiven. I want to die remembering nothing but my Saviour. I want to die knowing that His wisdom is friendly to me. . . and I cannot go near Him because the world looks at Him and at me suspiciously to accuse us. . ." Aglae cries, prostrate with grief.

Mary stands up whispering: "How difficult it is to be redeemers!" She is almost breathless.

Aglae, who hears the whisper and understands Her gesture, moans: "See? You can see that You are disgusted, too. I will now go away. I am done for!"

"No, My daughter. You are not done for. No, you are beginning now. Listen, poor soul. I am not moaning because of you, but because of the cruel world. I will not let you go, but I will pick you up, a poor swallow tossed by the storm against the walls of My house. I will take you to Jesus, and He will show you your way to Redemption. . ."

"I no longer hope. . . The world is right. I cannot be forgiven."

"You cannot by the world. You can by God. Let me speak to you in the name of the Supreme Love, Who gave Me a Son that I may give Him to the world. He took Me out of the blessed simplicity of My consecrated virginity so that the world might receive Forgiveness. He drew My blood not from My childbirth but from My heart by revealing to Me that My Creature is the Great Victim. Look at Me, daughter. There is a large wound in this heart. It has been groaning for over thirty years and it is becoming deeper and deeper and it consumes Me. Do you know its name?"

"Sorrow."

"No. Love. It is love that bleeds Me so that My Son may not be {alone} to save. It is love that sets Me on fire that I may purify those who dare not go to My Son. It is love that causes Me to weep that I may wash sinners. You wanted My caresses. I am giving you My tears that will already cleanse you and enable you to look at My Lord. Do not weep thus! You are not the only sinner who has come to the Lord and has left redeemed. Other women came, many more will be more.

"You are not sure that He can forgive you? But can you not see in everything that happened to you the mysterious will of Divine Goodness? Who brought you to Judea? Who took you to John's

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house? Who placed you at the window that morning? Who lit a light to illuminate His words for you? Who made you understand that charity, when joined to the prayers of those who have been helped, obtains help from God? Who gave you the strength to run away from Shammai's house and to persevere during the first days until His arrival? Who led you on to His way? Who enabled you to live as a repentant sinner to cleanse your soul more and more? Who gave you a martyr's soul, a believer's soul, a persevering and pure soul?

"Do not shake your head. Do you think only he is pure who has never known sensuality? Do you think that a soul can never again become virgin and beautiful? Oh! My daughter! Between the purity which is entirely a grace of the Lord and your heroic ascent to climb back to the summit of your lost purity, you must believe that yours is the greater. You are building it against against sensuality, against need and habit. For Me it is a natural endowment, like breathing. You have to break off your thoughts, your feelings, your flesh, in order not to remember, not to desire, not to yield. . . I. . . Oh! Can a little child, a few hours old, have carnal desires? And does he have any merit thereby? The same applies to Me. I do not know what that tragic hunger is that made mankind a victim. I know but the most holy hunger for God. But you did not know it and you learned it by yourself. But you subdued the other hunger, the tragic and horrible one, for the sake of God, your only love at present. Smile, daughter of divine mercy! My Son is working in you what He told you at Hebron. He has already done that. You are already saved, because of your good will to be saved, because you have come to know of purity, of sorrow, of Good. Your soul has revived. Yes, you need His word saying to you in the name of God: 'You are forgiven.' I cannot say that. But I give you My kiss as a promise, as a beginning of forgiveness. . .

"O Eternal Spirit, a little of You is always in Your Mary![125] Allow Her to pour forth Your Sanctifying Spirit on this creature who is weeping and hoping. For the sake of Our Son, o God of Love, save this woman who is expecting salvation from God. May the Grace, with which the Angel said that God has filled Me, may that Grace

125. "Mary had the Word to Herself for a while after She conceived Him and gave birth to Him. Therefore, as most pure priestess of Her poor fallen children, She could give them some sort of pledge of absolution and salvation until Jesus, the eternal Priest, would absolve and save them in the fullness of His power." (Maria Valtorta's explanation in D2.)

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by a miracle rest upon her and support her until Jesus, the Blessed Saviour, the Supreme Priest, absolves her in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Spirit. . .

"It is late, My daughter. You are tired and worn out. Come. Rest. You will go away tomorrow. . . I will send you to an honest family, because too many people come here now. And I will give you a dress like Mine and you will look like a Jewess. And as I will see My Son only in Judea, because Passover is near and at the new moon of April we shall be in Bethany, I will speak to Him of you. Come to the house of Simon the Zealot. You will find Me there and I will take you to Him."

Aglae is weeping again. But now she is at peace.

She is sitting on the floor. Also Mary has sat down again. And Aglae rests her head on Her knees and kisses Her hand. . . She then moans: "They will recognize me. . ."

"Oh! They will not. Do not be afraid. Your dress was too well known. But I will prepare you for your journey towards Forgiveness and you will be like a virgin going to her wedding: you will be different and unknown to the people unaware of the rite. Come. There is a little room near Mine. Saints and pilgrims wishing to go to God have rested in it. It will shelter you, too."

Aglae is about to pick up her large mantle and her veil.

"Leave them. They are the clothes of poor lost Aglae. But she no longer exists. . . and not even her dress is to remain. It experienced too much hatred. . . and hatred hurts as much as sin."

They go out into the dark kitchen garden and then into Joseph's little room. Mary lights the little lamp on the shelf, caresses the repentant woman one again, closes the door and with her treble light she looks to see where She can take Aglae's torn mantle so that nobody may see it the following day. (*Poema*, III, 149-159).

This long passage gave us a most vivid glimpse of Mary as "Mother of Mercy". . .

Later on, the Blessed Virgin did introduce Aglae, the penitent, to Jesus in Simon the Zealot's house. She said: "Here, Son, is the woman who has been looking for You for such a long time. Listen to her." At that She withdraws.

Aglae "kneels down at Jesus' feet and bursts into tears." Jesus comforts her and reassures her that God

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loves and forgives her. Then in answer to her request, He advises her to withdraw in a solitary place. Jesus says: "[In that place,] your flesh will die hour by hour and because your will wants that. It has been dying for almost one year. When it is completely dead, I will call you."

Aglae kisses Jesus' feet, says a few words to Mary, and leaves. Jesus blesses her and calls His Mother over. She draws near, saying,

"You made her happy, My Son. She has gone, with strength and peace" (*Poema*, III, 401-406).

Immediately after Mary of Magdala converted, she perfumed Jesus' feet and placed all her jewels at His feet. She then hastened to take refuge at Mary's home. Jesus said to Martha:

"[. . .That is] where there is peace, where souls are regenerated near the immaculate Mother, Who is such Life that She was granted the privilege of giving birth to the Christ, Who is the Life. Your sister is with My Mother. Oh! she is not the first to furl sail in that peaceful harbour after the gentle ray of the living Star of Mary called her to Her loving bosom, out of silent but active love for Her Son! Your sister is at Nazareth."

"But how did she go there if she does not know Your Mother, or Your house?. . . By herself. . . At night. . . Thus. . . Without means. . . Wearing that dress. . . Such a long way. . . How?"

"How? As a tired swallow flies back to its native nest, crossing seas and mountains, through storms, fog and hostile winds. As swallows fly to hibernating places. Instinct guides them, warmth invites them, the sun calls them. She also went to the ray inviting her. . . to the universal Mother. And we will see her come back happily at dawn. . . coming out for ever from darkness, with a Mother beside her, Mine, never to be an orphan again. Can you believe that?"

"Yes, my Lord."

Martha looks as if she were charmed (*Poema*, IV, 688).

Shortly after dawn, Mary of Magdala arrived in Capernaum accompanied by the Virgin Mary.

The shock is such that Peter stops for a moment as if he were nailed to the ground and he exclaims [speaking to Jesus]: "Your

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Mother and Mary of Magdala?!!! Together?!!! . . . Since when?"
"Since [Mary of Magdala] is Mary of Jesus. . . ." (*ibid.*, 691).

Meanwhile, Mary of Magdala's sister, Martha, had arrived in Capernaum. The meeting and embracing of both sisters was moving. At one point, Martha asked her sister:

"But why were you with Mary?"
The Magdalene lowers her head.
Our Lady comes to her rescue taking her by the hand and saying: "She came to Me as a pilgrim goes to a place where she can be told which road to take to reach her destination. And she said to Me: 'Teach me what I must do to belong to Jesus.' And since she is animated by thorough good will, she understood that wisdom at once! And I found that she was ready to be taken by the hand and led to You, My Son, and to you, good Martha, and to you, brother disciples, and say to you: 'Here is Your disciple and your sister, who will give but supernatural joys to her Lord and to her brothers.' I ask you to believe Me and to love her as Jesus and I love her."
The apostles then gather round her greeting their new sister (*Poema*, IV, 694.)

During their journey to Bethlehem of Galilee, the Virgin Mary completed Her work with the famous convert.

"Prayer is My Son's rest" whispers Mary.
The Magdalene replies to Her: "I think that it is also essential for Him to be alone in order to keep His wonderful control, which the world puts to hard tests. Do You know, Mother? I have done what You told me. Every night I seclude myself for a more or less long time to restore within me the calm, which many things upset. And I feel much stronger afterwards."
"At present you feel strong, later you will feel happy. Believe Me, Mary, both in peace and in struggle, in joy and in sorrow, our spirit needs to dive into the ocean of meditation to rebuild what the world and events demolish and to achieve fresh strength to climb higher and higher. . . . Prayer, to be really such, must be love. Otherwise it is mumbling of lips from which the soul is absent."
[Mary of Magdala asks:] "But is it awful to speak to God when one's lips are still dirty with so many profane words? In my hours of meditation, which I do as You, my most sweet apostle, taught

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me, I do violence to my heart, which would like to say to God: 'I love You'. . ."

"No! Why?"

"Because I feel I would be making a sacrilegious offer by offering my heart. . ."

"Do not do that, My dear daughter. First of all, your heart has been reconsecrated by the Son's forgiveness, and the Father sees only that forgiveness. But even if Jesus had not yet forgiven you, and in an ignored solitude, which could be both material and moral, you should shout to God: 'I love You. Father, forgive me my miseries. I am sorry for them because they grieve You,' believe Me, Mary, God the Father would absolve you Himself and your cry of love would be dear to Him. Give yourself up to love. Do not do violence to it. Nay, let it become as violent as a blaze. A fire consumes everything that is material, but it does not destroy {air in the slightest}. Because air is incorporeal. On the contrary it purifies it from the tiny debris blown by winds and makes it lighter. Love does the same to souls. It may consume man's matter quicker, if God allows that, but it will not destroy his spirit. It will, instead, increase its vitality and will make it pure and agile to be able to ascend to God. See John over there? He is only a boy. And yet he is an eagle. He is the strongest of all the apostles. Because he has understood the secret of strength, of spiritual formation: loving meditation."

"But he is pure. I. . . He is a boy. I. . ."

"Look at the Zealot, then. He is not a boy. He has lived, struggled, hated. He admits it frankly. But he has learned to meditate. And he, too, believe Me, is well high up. See? They look for each other, those two. Because they feel they are alike. They have reached the same perfect age of the spirit and by the same means: mental prayer. Through it the boy has become virile in his spirit and the man, already old and tired, has recovered a strong virility. And do you know another one, who without being an apostle, will make much progress, nay, *has already made* much progress, because of his natural inclination to meditation, which has become a spiritual necessity for him, since he is a friend of Jesus? Your brother."

"My Lazarus?. . . Oh! Mother! Since You know so many things because God shows them to You, tell me, how will Lazarus treat me, the first time we meet? Before he was disdainfully silent. But he did it because I would not bear being criticised. I have been very cruel to my brother and sister. . . I now realize it. Now that he

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knows that he can speak, what will he say to me? I am afraid of his frank reproach. Oh! he will certainly remind me of all the grief of which I was the cause. I would like to fly to Lazarus. But I am afraid of him. I used to go there, and not even the memories of my dead mother, her tears, which were still warm on the things she had used, tears she had shed for me, through my fault, would upset me. My heart was cynical, shameless, deaf to any voice, except to evil. But now I no longer have the wicked strength of Evil and I tremble. . . What will Lazarus do to me?"

"He will open his arms to you and will call you, more with his heart than with his lips 'my darling sister.' He is so formed in God that he can but behave thus. Be not afraid. He will not say one word about your past. It is just as if I could see him, he is there at Bethany and his days of waiting are very long for him. He is waiting for you, to clasp you to his heart, to sate his brotherly love. All you have to do is love him as he loves you to enjoy the happiness of being born of the same womb."

"I would love him even if he reproached me. I deserve it."

"But he will love you only. Nothing else" (*Poema*, IV, 760-762).

The Virgin's farewell to Mary of Magdala is also noteworthy:

"Goodbye, Mary. Remember that you wept on My breast your first happy tears. I am therefore your Mother because a baby weeps its first tears on its mother's breast. I am your Mother and will always be such. What may be burdensome for you to tell also the most kind sister, the most loving nurse, come and tell Me. I will always understand you. What you would not dare say to My Jesus, because it is still stained with humanity, which He does not want in you, come and tell Me. I will always be indulgent to you. (*ibid.*, p.825).

iii) "*Mother of Good Counsel*"

It is only natural for mothers to give advice to their children. Mary has always done so.

[Jesus is speaking to a group of women disciples.] "My Mother will be with you now . . . and with Her will remain the wisdom of all Her virtues. As from now you may follow all Her advice. . . . Follow Her word. It is the same as Mine, but made sweeter. Nothing

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is to be added to it because it is the word of the Mother of Wisdom" (*Poema*, III, 84-85).

"Listen," [Azariah, the Angel, says to the Seer]. "She is singing in Her pearly light: 'Blessed are those who walk along My ways.' The ways of Mary lead to God's heart. 'Listen to My advice and become wise. Don't turn your ear away.' Such a holy Mother as She can speak only words of life. Think about it. She was already full of grace, and, therefore, full of wisdom. Then She bore the Word in Her womb for nine months, and the Word found His rest on Her bosom from the day He was born, through His childhood, and even when He died. How much grace did He leave in Her after spending thirty-three years so close to Her heart. God the Son, who never remains passive even towards the guilty, never remained passive towards His lovable Mother. That is why all His Wisdom was united to all Her Purity, and Mary can speak but the Word of God, the very Word which Christ said was Life for those who listen to it" (*Azariah*, p.345).

When Gamaliel, the famous Rabbi, became old and blind, he sought the light. He sought advice from Mary, the Seat of Wisdom, begging Her to obtain for him not bodily vision, but the sight of an eagle to enable his spirit to see the whole truth, so as to see Jesus and love Him with his whole being. The Blessed Virgin, seeing that he was rather depressed, tried to encourage him in every way.

"Gamaliel, can you believe that I am the Seat of Wisdom and the Full of Grace? That Wisdom took flesh in Me? That because I am full of Grace, Grace gave me the fullness of supernatural knowledge? Do you believe I can give you sound advice?"

"Oh! Yes, I believe!" [Gamaliel replies]. "It is precisely because I believe that, that I have come to You to obtain the light . . . I am so aware of my errors, so crushed by my spiritual misery, that I need help to dare go to God."

"You think that's an obstacle?" [the Mother of Good Counsel replies]. "On the contrary, it is a wing that will make you soar towards God. You have demolished yourself, you have humbled yourself. You used to be a powerful mountain, Gamaliel, and have made yourself a deep valley. Learn that humility is like fertilizer preparing the most

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infertile land to produce many plants, even bumper crops. It is a step on which one can climb. Actually, it is a staircase that ascends to God. When God sees a humble person, He calls him to Himself to glorify him and set him on fire with the fire of His charity and illumine him with His lights so that he can see. That is why I tell you that you are already in the light, on the way of justice, on your way to the true life of the children of God."

[Gamaliel addresses John.] "Now that Mary's words and your words have comforted me, I want to enter the Master's sheepfold immediately, before my old heart, broken by many things, takes its final rest..."

Mary spontaneously embraces him and says to him: "May God grant you peace. . . . May God always be with you. May God give you His blessing."

Gamaliel [who is blind] again gropes for Mary's hands. He takes them into his own, kisses them and kneeling down, begs Her to impose Her blessed hands on his old, tired head.

Mary contents him . . . . Then She helps him to stand up. . . . Humanly speaking, Gamaliel is a worn-out man, he is finished; but from the supernatural point of view, he is reborn (*Poema,* X, 316-318).

iv) *"Health of the Sick"*

Il Poema dell'Uomo-Dio calls the Blessed Virgin

"Healthy Cure of sick people" (*Poema,* III, p.84).

One day, in the second year of His Public Ministry, Jesus was in Judas' house in Kerioth. Judas drew His attention to a lame man who wished to be healed. Since it was not possible to carry him over, he urged Jesus to come along with him to see the man. Jesus answered: "Tomorrow, Judas, tomorrow morning, definitely. And if there are more sick people tell Me or bring them here." At this time the Virgin Mary and Simon Peter came in. Mary greeted Jesus and then Judas' mother who had bowed low. Mary lifted her up and embraced her, as if she was a dear friend She had not seen in a long time.

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Our Lady was arriving from Beth-Tsur, where She had been with Jesus a few days before to visit Eliza, a widow. Eliza was a former companion of Mary's at the Temple. Her two children had died, which plunged Eliza into a deep desolation. She had withdrawn into her room in profound despair. Jesus comforted her and left His mother with her for a few days (*Poema*, III, 472-482). Mary's affectionate presence gave life and vigor to this wilted flower. Mary then left Eliza and met with Her Son in Judas' house in Kerioth. Handing Him a little scroll, She said:

"Here, Son, Eliza's greetings" . . . . Jesus unfolds it and reads it, then says: "I knew. I was sure. Thank you, Mother. On My behalf and on Eliza's. *You really are the Health of the sick!*" (*ibid.*, p.519).

On another occasion, Judas Iscariot was gravely ill and experienced Mary's affectionate motherly care. Later on, he said to Jesus that

he never felt the desire for his mother, not even in the worst hours of his disease, because "Your Mother was a real mother to me, She was kind and loving, and I will never forget it" he said (*Poema*, IV, 629).

v) "*Mother of Orphans*"

In the first year of His Public Ministry, while visiting His Mother in Her home in Nazareth, Jesus brought Her two orphans, shepherd helpers from Bethlehem.

"Oh! Mother: I found the shepherds of Bethlehem. And I brought You two of them: they are orphans and You are the Mother. Of all men. And more so of orphans" (*Poema*, II, 318).

The next day He entrusted them to Her, saying:

"Here are two sons looking for a mother. Be their joy, Woman."
"You are welcome!" [Mary exclaims] "You?. . . Levi. . . You? I do not know, but according to your age, as He told Me, you must be Joseph. That name is sweet and sacred in this house. Come, come.

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It is with joy that I say to You: My house welcomes you and a Mother embraces you . . . ."

The shepherds seem spellbound, they are so enraptured. (*Poema*, II, 323).

Mary's encounter with Yabeh, a little orphan, is moving. Jesus took this little boy along, and brought him from the Mount of Olives to Bethany, holding him by the hand. When they arrived, Jesus let go of the child's hand and ran to greet Mary. Yabeh felt left alone.

He looks, then bends his head, endeavours to restrain his tears. . . but he cannot and bursts out weeping, moaning: "{Mommie! Mommie!}" . . .

But before Yabeh can catch his breath and speak while shedding so many tears, Mary has run towards him and taken him in Her arms saying: "Yes, My little child, your Mother! Do not cry any more. . . and excuse Me if I did not see you before. My friends, here is My little son. . ." It is obvious that Jesus, in the few seconds while approaching the boy, must have said to Her: "He is a little orphan I brought with Me." Mary realized the rest.

The boy is still weeping, but not so disconsolately, and as Mary is holding him in Her arms and kissing him, he ends up by smiling while his face is still wet with tears.

"Let Me dry those tears of yours," [Mary says to him]. "You must not cry any more! Give Me a kiss. . ."

Yabeh was expecting nothing but that and after being caressed by bearded men, he is overjoyed in kissing Mary's smooth cheek (*Poema*, III, p.381).

Mary gave the child the name Margziam (later shortened to Marziam: *ibid.*, 391). This was "a name of love and of salvation" (*ibid.*, 385). It meant: "little {drop} in the sea of those saved by Jesus" (*ibid.*, 385). Later, She intervened to have him entrusted to Peter and his wife Porphirea (*ibid.*, 398-400).[126] He eventually became a fervent disciple and preached the Gospel of Jesus.

126. See the account of Mary's intervention on p.203 [Editor.]

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vi) "*Comfort of the Afflicted*"

[Mary speaking.] "I cannot bear to see anybody suffer . . ." (*Poema*, IV, p.765).

She could not even bear looking at the slaughter of a lamb because She would think about its mother's heart-break.

". . . it tears My heart to see a mother tortured," [She says to the shepherds of Bethlehem of Galilee].

"But, Woman, if all the lambs were to live, there would be no room for us on the earth" says the oldest shepherd.

"I know. But I am thinking of their pain, and the pain of their mothers. They weep so much when their little ones are taken away from them. They look like real mothers, like us. . . . [A mother's grief is different] from any other, because the shock for the loss of a son tears not only our hearts and brains, but our very wombs. We mothers are always united to our sons. And it rends us completely, when they are taken away from us" (*ibid.*)

At that precise moment, a small detachment of soldiers passed by, entering Bethlehem of Galilee to take a son from his mother. They wanted to put him to death, on the calumnious charge of killing a rich man by the name of Joel. Hearing about this, Jesus says:

"I see. Let us go, My friends. You women stay here with the shepherds. I shall be back soon."

"No, Son," [Mary says to Jesus]. "I am coming with You."

Jesus is already walking fast towards the center of the town. . . .

The woman is still contending for her son with the guards . . . . "Leave him! Murderers! He's innocent! The night Joel was killed he was in bed beside me! . . ."

The guards, however, wrench her son away from her, and the poor woman falls on the ground, swooning.

Jesus stops before the group of captors. "Stop for one moment. I order you!" His countenance allows no objection. (*ibid.*, 766-768).

He vigorously attacks the witnesses' false testimony. Meanwhile, the Blessed Virgin and Mary of Alpheus help the unconscious mother. The accused swears he is inno-

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cent. The accusers commit perjury. . . Suddenly, the accused and the accusers scream out at the same time. The accused, a scream of surprise; the accusers, a cry of horror: the accusers' faces were instantly covered with horrible leprosy, while the accused remained healthy. Jesus takes the young man by the hand and leads him away from the lepers. Everyone else, including the soldiers, move away. Jesus orders the young man to go back to his mother. After a brief speech to the lepers and to the other people, Jesus joins His Mother and Mary of Clopas who are still attending to the woman slowly coming to. The poor mother gazes at the loving countenance of Mary, comfort of the afflicted, and recovers her strength. Her son pats her cold hands and kisses them. After expressing motherly concern for her vindicated son, she "takes Jesus' hand kissing and wetting it with tears." She then says to Him,

"My son's life and mine are Yours, because You have saved them."

[Jesus replies to her:] "You will follow your son and Me. Be happy . . ." (*Poema*, IV, p.768-771).

It would be difficult not to conclude this insight into Mary's universal motherhood without exclaiming, along with Jesus, "the Firstborn among many brothers":

"How motherly You are! You are *the 'Mother'!*" (*Poema*, V, p.429).

2. Mary, Queen of the Church.

We have seen that Mary is the Mother of the Church. As Mother of the Mystical Body of Christ, She communicates supernatural life to all its members. She does so with Christ, while being subordinated to Him (as the Neck is subordinated to the Head).

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In the same way — with Christ and under Christ — Mary also *exerts true dominion* over all the members of the Church. Thus Mary is the Queen of the Church. Since the Church is the Kingdom of Christ, it is also Mary's.

[God speaking to the Angels and saints of Heaven immediately after Our Lady's Assumption.] "For Her . . . I open the treasures of Heaven. For Her head which never yielded to pride, I fashion, with My own splendour, a wreath and crown Her as your Queen, because for Me She is Most Holy" (*Poema*, X, p.357).

[Our Lady commented God's words]. "When God finished speaking, the spirits of Heaven shone for joy. Since it was impossible for these spirits to shed tears in response to [the] exuberance [welling up inside of them], they, instead, sparkled with light. Heaven witnessed splendid colours being brightened into even more spectacular colours. The flaming fire of charity was fanned into an even greater blaze, while heavenly choirs resounded in their incomparable and indescribable harmonies. My Son's voice joined them in praising God the Father and blessing His handmaid who would be eternally happy" (*ibid.*).

Maria Valtorta's writings exalt Mary both as "Queen of the Church" in its entireness (*Azariah*, p. 108), and as Queen of various categories of persons: Queen of the Angels, Queen of the Apostles, Queen of Virgins, etc.

a) Mary, "Queen of Humanity"

Mary is the "Queen . . . of every creature" (*ibid.*, p.336). The following text reminds one of the *Hail, Holy Queen*. Jesus told His Mother that innocent creatures would not be the only ones coming to Her.

"Lepers, horrors, stench, a tangle of snakes and foul things, will creep to Your feet, *O Queen of mankind*, and will shout: 'Have mercy! Succour us! Take us to Your Son!'" (*Poema*, III, p.84).

On the night Jesus was born, the shepherds of Bethlehem prostrated themselves before Mary and said:

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"Give us orders as our Queen, because we will be happy to serve You. What can we do for You?" (*Poema*, I, 203).

The most elect part of the human race consists in the blessed in Heaven. That is why God calls Mary "Queen of My Paradise" (*Poema*, I, 34). The reason for this? Mary is the "Queen Mother," the "Mother of the King of Kings" (*Quad. '43*, p.590 [Nov. 27]).

b) Mary, *Queen of Various Categories of Persons*

Our Lady is proclaimed the "Queen of Angels," "Queen of Apostles," "Queen of Virgins."

i) "*Queen of Angels*"

In several passages, Maria Valtorta calls Mary "Queen of the Angels" (*Azariah*, p.108; 336, etc.). Several times, Angels call Her "our Queen" (*ibid.*, p.262, 263, 341).

Shortly before Her glorious Assumption to Heaven, Our Lady, as though remembering that She was the "Queen of Angels," spoke at length about them with John the Apostle:

"Everything is [so peaceful]. You too, be at peace. Everything is quiet except for the olive trees, but their rustling is so light that it sounds like Angels hovering about the house. Perhaps some Angels are really here! After all, there has always been at least one Angel close to Me at key times in My life. They were with Me in Nazareth, when the Spirit of God made My virginal womb bear life [Lk 1:26]. Angels were at Joseph's side when he was troubled and did not know what to do with Me when he found out I was with child [Mt 1:18-25]. In Bethlehem, Angels came to us when Jesus was born [Lk 2:9-15], and when we had to flee to Egypt [Mt 2:13]. They came in Egypt, too, ordering us to go back to Palestine [Mt 2:19-20].

"Jesus appeared to Me as soon as He rose from the dead. Since He is the King of Angels, no Angel needed appear to Me [on that occasion]. Angels appeared to the Pious women instead; it was dawn

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on the first day after the Sabbath [Mt 28:1-7; Mk 16:1-8; Lk 24:1-8; Jn 20:12-13]. The Angels ordered the women to tell you and Peter what to do.

"*Yes, Angels and light have always been provided at key times in My life* and Jesus' life. Light, as well as fiery love, would come down from God's Throne to Me, His handmaid. Light and love would surge out of My heart and soar up to God, My King and My Lord. Fiery love and light would unite Me to God, and God to Me. Because of this unity, all the Scriptures that had to be fulfilled came to be fulfilled. Also, light was spread out as a curtain to shield God's secrets from Satan and his slaves. In this way the Enemy would not find out until the time was ripe, that the sublime mystery of the Incarnation had been accomplished.

"I can't see any Angels tonight, but I feel them around Me. And I can feel in Me, inside of Me, a growing Light. It is an unbearable light, like the light that surrounded Me when I conceived the Christ, when I gave Him to the world. It is coming from a throb of love stronger than my usual. With a similar surge of love, I was able to obtain the Word from Heaven before the appointed time, so that He would become the Man and Redeemer. With a similar surge of love, like the one uplifting Me tonight, Heaven will hopefully ravish Me and take Me, in My spirit, to the place I pine for! There, I could sing for ever with the multitude of saints and the choirs of Angels! I could sing My imperishable *Magnificat* [Lk 1:46-55] to God for the great things He has done for Me, His handmaid" (*Poema*, X, p.334-335).

In the previous text, we have a host of Angels hovering close to their Queen. In the humble house in Nazareth, however, it was only

"the Archangel who venerated his Queen" (*Poema*, III, 73).

ii) "*Queen of the Apostles*"

After Christ's Resurrection, especially on Pentecost day, all the Apostles considered Mary as their Queen. Immediately after Matthias was elected to replace Judas as an Apostle, the other Apostles took him

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"to Mary, who [was] deep in prayer in Her room. They want[ed] the new Apostle to receive the word of salvation and election from the Mother of God" (*Poema*, X, 263).

They also wanted him to pay homage to the "Queen of the Apostles" (*Azariah*, p. 51; 108; 111).

Mary's dignity as Queen of the Apostles is particularly evident on Pentecost day, when the Holy Spirit made His descent. Only the Twelve, under Mary's direction, (*ibid.*, 158) are in the Eucharist Room.[127] The windows are closed and barred.

The Virgin Mary is the only one sitting on a seat. Peter is sitting on a table-couch on Her right hand, and John, on Her left. Matthias, the new Apostle, is sitting between Thaddeus and James of Alpheus. In front of Mary, there lies a wide, low chest made of dark wood. It is closed.

Mary is wearing dark blue clothing. Under the tip of Her coat, a white veil covers Her hair. The others are bare-headed.

Mary is reading slowly, out loud, . . . from a scroll that She is holding open. The others meditate as they listen quietly. Once in a while they reply when it is called for.[128]

Mary's face is transfigured by an ecstatic smile. Who knows what She can see, that makes Her eyes gleam like two bright stars, and Her cheeks, normally the colour of ivory, blush as if She was reflecting a pink flame. She is really the mystical Rose. . .

With their heads turned slightly, the Apostles lean forward to look at Her face. Meanwhile, She goes on reading with a soft smile. Her voice is like the song of an Angel. Peter is so moved that two big tears roll along the deep creases on both sides of his nose until they are lost in his bushy, greyish beard. John smiles like the Virgin Mary. Like Her, he is set ablaze with love. His eyes follow the words that She is reading on the scroll. When he gives Her another scroll, he looks at Her and smiles.

Mary has ceased speaking: the reading is finished. Once the scrolls of parchment are re-rolled and no longer rustle, Mary begins to pray

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127. See note 96 on p.159. [Translator.]

128. Mary, Mother of the Church, is leading the Apostles in prayer. There is reading and listening, reciting and meditating, with active participation. (Fr. Berti's note in the Italian critical edition, vol.X, p.265, note 5.)

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in secret. She joins Her hands on Her bosom and leans Her head on the closed chest. The Apostles imitate Her. . .

The morning's quiet is suddenly shattered by a mighty, harmonious rumble that reminds one at once of the wind and the harp, human singing and the boom of a perfect organ. As it draws near, it sounds louder and even more harmonious. It fills the ground with its vibrations, which spread to the house, to the walls and objects. The candelabra's chains tinkle as they sway because of the supernatural sound that flows by them. The flame, which had been still until then in the closed, peaceful room, trembles as if there was wind.

The Apostles, frightened, lift their heads. The mighty sound, very beautiful, contains all the nicest notes that God gave to Heaven and earth. As it draws nearer, however, some of the Apostles stand up, ready to run away. Others huddle on the ground, covering their heads with their hands and coats, or beating their chests and asking the Lord for forgiveness. Yet others huddle next to Mary, the most Pure. They are too scared to keep at a distance from Her as they usually do. John is the only one who is not scared, since he sees Mary's face beaming with great joy and luminous peace. Mary lifts up Her head, smiling at something She alone can see. Smoothly going to Her knees, She opens Her arms. The two blue wings of Her open coat cover Peter and John who, like Her, have knelt.

I have taken a few minutes to describe all this, but it happened in less than one.

Now, although the room is closed — all the doors and windows are shut — the Light, the Blaze, the Holy Spirit enters with one last thunderous, melodious crash. He appears in the shape of an extremely brilliant globe blazing all around. When Mary sees the fiery Paraclete, She raises Her arms so as to invoke Him. Her veil slips off as She lifts Her head straight up, with a shout of joy and a smile expressing Her boundless love.

The Holy Spirit, in full Blaze, hovers about three hand-widths over Mary's uncovered head. For a short while, the fullness of the Holy Spirit's Love rests above His Spouse. After a moment, the Most Holy Globe *separates into thirteen dazzling, dancing flames.*[129] No light on earth compares with theirs.

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129. "It is perhaps significant that Maria Valtorta says that all the Fire of the divine Paraclete condensed Itself and stopped over His Spouse's virginal head, and there divided Itself into thirteen flames. This passage illustrates God's conjugal love for the

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Twelve of the flames descend as a kiss, one on each Apostle's forehead. The thirteenth flame, however, does not alight on Mary as a tongue of fire kissing Her on the forehead. Instead, a fiery wreath encircles Her virginal head, like a flaming crown. The Daughter, Mother, and Spouse of God; the incorruptible Virgin, the Most Beautiful, the eternal Child; the One who had been loved from eternity, is crowned as a Queen. Nothing can vilify Her in any way. Grief had aged Her, but the joy of the Resurrection rejuvenated Her. Together with Her Son, She now enjoys increased beauty, while Her flesh, gaze and vitality have been renewed. . . Her beauty at Pentecost is already a pledge of the beauty of Her glorious body which would be taken to Heaven to be the Flower of Paradise.

The Holy Spirit makes His flames sparkle around His beloved's head. What words is He whispering to Her? It remains a mystery. Her face is transfigured with supernatural joy. Her smile is like the smile of the Seraphim. Diamonds seem to be tumbling down the cheeks of the Most Blessed Woman, as the Light of the Holy Spirit shines on Her tears of joy.

The Blaze remains as a crown on Mary's head for some time. . . Then It disappears. . . A fragrance is left behind, such as no earthly flower can distill. . . It is a perfume from Paradise. . .

The Apostles come back to their senses. . . Mary, however, remains in ecstasy. Only, She folds Her arms on Her chest, closes Her eyes, and bows Her head. . . She pursues Her dialogue with God. . . She is unaware of what is going on around Her. . .

No one dares bother Her. John points at Her, saying: "She is the altar. On Her glory, the Glory of the Lord has descended. . ."

"That is true. Let's not rob Her of Her joy. Let's go preach about the Lord, instead! May His words be manifested among the nations!" Peter is speaking with a supernatural impulse.

"Let's go! Let's go! The Spirit of God is burning inside of me," James of Alpheus cries out.

"He's urging us all to do something. Let's go evangelize the world."

They storm out as if they were pushed, or drawn, by a violent wind or some force (*Poema*, X, p.264-268).

Blessed Virgin and Hers for Her Lord, as well as the office and power of the Mediatrix, who called and attracted on earth the Holy Spirit and merited Its most fruitful descent." (Fr. Berti's annotation in the Italian critical edition, vol.X, p.266, note 12.)

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Since the Apostles and their successors have a complete share of the priesthood, it is not without grounds that Jesus deigned to give Our Lady the title of "Queen of the Priesthood" (*ibid.*, p.29).

iii) "*Queen of Virgins*"

One afternoon, before Christ's Ascension, the Blessed Virgin was in Lazarus' home in Bethany. The most faithful women disciples were gathered around Her, in a well ventilated room. Bartholomew the Apostle, at one point, looked at this group of virgin disciples. They blushed as if sunset rays touched them.

Actually, it is a spiritual flame of intense joy that is setting their faces on fire. *Mary, the Virgin of virgins*, smiles silently and bows Her head. Wearing white linen, She seems to be a lily clothed with candor. . . (*Poema*, X, p.235).

"Virgin of Virgins." The innumerable troop of chosen Christian virgins was born, so to speak, in Nazareth, in Mary's humble home, during the second year of Her divine Son's Public Ministry.

Jesus with Peter, Andrew and John, knocks at the door of His house in Nazareth. The door is opened at once by His Mother, Whose face brightens with a beautiful smile on seeing Jesus.

"Welcome home, My Son! Since yesterday I have had with Me a pure dove waiting for You. She came from far away. The person who brought her here could not stay longer. As she asked for My advice, I told her what I could. but only You, My Son, are the Wisdom. You are welcome, too" She says to the disciples. "Come in and refresh yourselves."

"Yes, stay here. I am going at once to see the girl who is waiting for Me."

The three disciples are very curious, but show their curiosity in different ways. . . .

Jesus pays no attention to any of them. While the three make up their minds and go into the kitchen, where Mary offers them some food in the warmth of the fireplace, Jesus draws the curtain that

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conceals the door opening on to the kitchen garden and goes out into it.

The mild sunshine makes more airy and dream-like all the blooming branches of the tall almond-tree. The only tree in blossom, the tallest in the kitchen garden, looks splendid in its silk white-pink dress, compared with the poverty of all the others . . . .

Jesus with His arms folded on His chest, standing in the sun, smiles at the serene gracefulness of His Mother's kitchen garden, with its bed of lilies recognizable from their first leaves, its still bare rose-bushes and silvery olive leaves, and many other families of flowers spread among the humble beds of legumes and vegetables, which are just becoming green. Clean, tidy and unassuming, it also seems to exhale the purity of perfect virginity.

"Son, come to My room. I will bring Her to You, because she ran {out there to the other end} when she heard so many voices."

Jesus enters His Mother's room, the chaste, the most chaste little room, which heard the words of the angelical conversation and which exhales, even more than the kitchen garden, the virginal, angelical, holy essence of Her Who has lived in it for years and of the Archangel who venerated his Queen in it. . . .

The curtain is softly raised by Mary's hand; Jesus, Who was contemplating that abode of purity, standing with His back to the door, turns round.

"Here, My Son. I have brought her to You. She is a little lamb. You are her Shepherd" and Mary, Who has come in holding by the hand a slender brunette young girl, who blushes vehemently when she appears in Jesus' presence, quietly withdraws letting the curtain down.

"Peace to you, child."

"Peace... Lord..." The girl, deeply moved, is speechless, but she kneels down and bows her head.

"Stand up. What do you want from Me? Do not be afraid..."

"I am not afraid... but... now that I am in front of You... after longing so much... what seemed easy and necessary to tell You... I cannot remember... it does not seem what it was... I am silly... forgive me, my Lord..."

"Do you want a grace for this world?[130] Do you need a miracle?

130. D2 bears the following note: "Jesus already knew that and also remembered [that He had healed her; see further], but He wanted souls to open up freely and with complete trust."

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Have you souls to convert? No? What, then? Speak up! You had so much courage and now are losing heart? Do you not know that I am the One who increases strength? Yes? You do? Well, then, speak as if I were a father to you. You are young. How old are you?"

"Sixteen years, my Lord."

"Where have you come from?"

"From Jerusalem."

"What is your name?"

"Anna-Leah..."

"['Anna,'] the dear name of My grand-mother and of many more holy women of Israel, and joined to it, to make one only, the name of the good, faithful, loving, meek wife of Jacob [Leah]. It will be a good omen to you. You will be a model wife and mother. No? You are shaking your head? You are weeping? Have you been rejected? No? Your fiancé perhaps died? Has no one proposed to you yet?"

The girl always shakes her head. Jesus takes a step forward, caresses her and forces her to raise her head and look at Him... Jesus' smile overcomes the girl's {agitation}. She takes heart: "My Lord, I could be a wife and a happy one, thanks to You. Do You not recognize me, my Lord? I am the girl who suffered from tuberculosis, the dying fiancée, whom You cured at Your John's request... After Your grace I... I have had another body: this healthy one in the place of the dying one I had before; and I have had another soul... I do not know. I did not feel the same... The joy of being cured, and consequently the certainty I could get married — my regret in dying was that I could not get married — they only lasted for a few hours. And then..."

The girl becomes {more and more confident.} She finds the words and the ideas that she had lost in the {awesomeness} of being alone with the Master...

"...And then I felt that I should not be only selfish, and say only: 'Now I will be happy,' but that I should think of something else, something that came to You and to God, Your Father and mine. Something that, although small, should express my gratitude. I gave the matter a lot of thought and when the following Sabbath I saw my fiancé I said to him: 'Listen, Samuel. Without the miracle I would have died in a few months' time and you would have lost me for ever. Now I would like to offer a sacrifice to God, with you, to say to God that I praise Him and thank Him.' And Samuel, because he loves me, said at once: 'Let us go to the Temple together and

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offer a sacrifice.' But that was not what I wanted. I am a poor and common girl, my Lord. I know very little and I can do much less. But through Your hand, which You laid on my diseased breast, something had come not only into my corroded lungs, but also into my heart. It was health to my lungs, and wisdom to my heart. And I realized that the sacrifice of a lamb was not the sacrifice wanted by my soul that. . . that loved You." The girl becomes silent, blushing after her profession of love.

"Go on without any fear. What did your soul want?"

"To sacrifice something worthy of You, the Son of God! And so. . . so I thought it should be something spiritual like what comes from God, that is, the sacrifice of postponing my wedding, for Your sake, my Saviour. A wedding, You know, is a great joy. When one is in love it is a great thing! One longs to. . . is anxious to celebrate it!. . . But I was no longer the same person as a few days previously. I no longer wanted my wedding as the dearest thing. . . I told Samuel. . . and he understood me. He also wanted to be a nazirite[131] for one year, starting on the day which was to be the day of our wedding, that is the day after the calends of Adar. In the meantime he has been looking for You, because he wanted to love and know Him Who had given him back his fiancée: You. And he found You, after many months, at the Clear Water. I came too. . . and Your word completed the change of my heart. Now my previous vow is no longer sufficient for me. . . Like that almond tree out there, which in the warmer and warmer sunshine has revived after being dead for months and has blossomed and will leaf and then bear fruit, so I have continuously grown in the knowledge of what is better. The last time, when I was already sure of myself and of what I wanted — I have pondered on the matter all these past months — the last time I went to the Clear Water, You were no longer there. . . They had driven You away. I wept and prayed so much that the Most High heard me and persuaded my mother to send me here with a relative who was going to Tiberias to speak to the courtiers of the Tetrarch. The steward told me that I would find You here. I found Your Mother. . . and Her words, only listening to Her and being beside Her these two days, have completely matured the fruit of Your grace."

131. See the Book of Numbers, chapter 6.

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The girl has knelt down as if she were in front of an altar, her arms folded on her chest.

"All right. But what do you want exactly? What can I do for you?"

"Lord, I would like. . . I would like a great thing. And only You, the Donor of life and health, can give it to me, because I think that what You can give, You can also take away. . . I would like You to take the life You gave me, during the year of my vow, before it ends. . ."

"Why? Are you not grateful to God for the life you received?"

"So grateful! Infinitely! But for one thing only: because by living by His grace and by Your miracle I have understood what is best."

"Which is?"

"Which is to live like angels. As Your Mother, my Lord. . . as You live. . . as Your John lives. . . The three lilies, the three white flames, the three beatitudes of the earth, my Lord. Yes. Because I think that it is a beatitude to possess God and God is possessed by the pure. I believe that who is pure is a Heaven with God in its center and the angels around. . . Oh! My Lord! That is what I would like. . . Little have I heard of what You, Your Mother, the disciple and Isaac have said. Neither have I approached anyone else who could tell me Your words. But I feel as if my soul heard You all the time and You were its Master. . . I have told You everything, my Lord. . ."

"Anna-Leah, you are asking for very much and are giving very much. . . Daughter: you have understood God and the perfection to which a creature may rise to be like the Most Pure and to please the Most Pure."

Jesus has laid His hands on the sides of the head of the dark-haired girl, who is kneeling in front of Him and speaks bending over her:

"He Who was born of a Virgin — because He could but build His nest on a pile of lilies — is nauseated, My dear daughter, by the triple lechery of the world and He would be crushed by so much nausea if His Father, Who knows on what His Son lives, did not intervene with loving help to support My soul in anguish. The pure are My joy. You are giving Me what the world takes from Me through its unexhausted baseness. May the Father and you, dear girl, be blessed for that. Go happily. Something will intervene to make your vow an eternal one. Be one of the lilies scattered on the blood-stained ways of Christ."

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"Oh! My Lord. . . there is still one thing I would like. . ."

"Which?"

"Not to be present at Your death. . . I could not see Him die, Who is my Life."

Jesus smiles kindly and with His hand He wipes off the tears streaming down her little dark face. "Do not weep. Lilies are never in mourning. You shall smile with all the pearls of your angelical crown when you see the crowned King enter His Kingdom. Go. May the Spirit of the Lord teach you while I am away. I bless you with the fire of Eternal Love."

Jesus looks out on to the kitchen garden and calls: "Mother! Here is a little daughter, she is all Yours. She is now happy. But immerse her in Your purity every time we go to the Holy City, that she may become snow of celestial petals spread on the throne of the Lamb." And Jesus goes back to His disciples, while Mary caresses the girl and stays with her.

Peter, Andrew and John look at Him inquisitively. And Jesus' bright face tells them that He is happy. Peter cannot help asking: "To whom did You speak so long, my Master? And what have You heard to be so beaming with joy?"

"To a woman at the dawn of life, to her who will be *the dawn of many more that will come.*"

"Who?"

"*The virgins.*"

Andrew mumbles, in a low voice, to himself: "It is not her. . ."[132]

"No. It is not she. But do not tire of praying, be good and patient. Every word of your prayer is like a call, a light in the dark and it supports and guides her."

"But who is my brother waiting for?"

"For a soul, Peter. A great poverty that he wants to change into a great wealth."

"And where did Andrew find it, since he never goes about, he never speaks, and he is a helpless sort of {man}?"

"On My way. Come with Me, Andrew. Let us go and see Alpheus [of Sarah] and bless him amongst his many grand-children. You wait for Me at James and Judas [Thaddeus'] home. My Mother wants to be left alone all day."

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132. Andrew was looking forward to the day when Aglae, whom he had taught secretly, would come to see Jesus.

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And while they go away, some here, some there, *secrecy envelops the joy of the first girl consecrated to virginity for Christ's sake* (*Poema*, III, p.72-77).

The following day, Jesus spoke to the women disciples. He said:

"Yesterday, a girl asked Me to immolate her, before the hour of her wedding strikes, because she feels that she loves Me, as God is to be loved; that is with her whole self, with the absolute perfection of giving herself. And I will do it. I have concealed the hour from her, that her soul may not tremble with fear, or her body more than her soul. Her death will be like the end of a flower, that closes its corolla in the evening, thinking it will reopen it in the following day, but never opens it again, because the kiss of the night has sucked its life. And I will do it, according to her desire, by bringing forward her repose of death to a few days before Mine. So that this first virgin of Mine may not be kept waiting in limbo, and I may find her immediately after My death. . .

"Do not weep! I am the Redeemer. . . This holy girl did not ask to follow Me, but she did not limit herself to hosannas immediately after the miracle, but she worked the miracle as if it were money invested at an interest, and from human gratitude she passed to a supernatural one, from an earthly desire to a heavenly one, showing a maturity of spirit, which is superior to almost everybody else's. I say '*almost*' because amongst you who are listening to Me, there are perfections that are equal and even greater. She did not ask to follow Me, nay she showed the desire to accomplish her {transformation} from a girl to an angel in the secrecy of her abode. And I love her so much that in the hours of disgust at what the world is, I will recall this kind creature, blessing the Father, Who wipes away My tears and perspiration of a Master in a world that does not want Me, by means of such flowers of love and purity (*Poema*, III, p.81).

In the third year of Jesus' Public Ministry, an episode which occurs in Johanna of Khuza's house illuminates the *Queen of Virgins* brightly. All of Jesus' women disciples who were in Jerusalem on the Thursday before Passover are busy with Mary. They help Johanna and her husband to prepare a meal for beggars, orphans, cripples, the blind, and elderly people. At one point, Jesus chances

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upon Anna-Leah (the first consecrated virgin) and Jairus' daughter (the one He raised from the dead). Overhearing Anna-Leah calling Jairus' daughter by the name of Miryam, Jesus asks her:

". . . But when did you change your name to Miriam?" . . .

"Today. Just now. Your Mother gave me it. Because... is that right, Anna-Leah? This is a great day for four virgins..."

"Yes, it is! Shall we tell the Lord, or shall we let Mary tell Him?"

"Let Mary tell Him. Go, my Lord. Your Mother will tell You" and they run away nimbly . . .. (*Poema*, V, p.477)

Jesus climbs to the roof-deck and greets several women gathered there (not all of them disciples). Mary is at His side.

In the golden light filtering through the large velarium spread over most of the terrace and which becomes a delicate emerald light where it reaches faces, after filtering through entangled rose bushes and jasmines forming a pergola, She looks even younger and slimmer; a sister of the younger women disciples, just a little older and as beautiful as the most beautiful of the roses blooming in the hanging garden or in the large flower pots placed around it and containing roses, jasmines, lilies of the valley and other delicate plants.

"Mother, my wife has spoken in a {strange} way!... What happened, why did she say that she is crippled and crowned at the same time?" asks Philip, who is anxious to know.

Mary smiles kindly looking at him, and although She is averse to familiarities, She takes his hand saying: "Would you be able to give My Jesus what is dearest to you? You really ought to... because He gives you Heaven and the Way to get there."

"Of course I would, Mother... particularly if what I gave Him would make Him happy."

"It would. Philip, your daughter also is consecrating herself to the Lord. She told Me and her mother a little while ago, in the presence of many women disciples..."

"What? You!" exclaims Philip dumbfounded pointing his finger at the gentle girl, who clings to Mary as if she wished to be protected. The apostle swallows with difficulty this second blow that deprives him for good of the hope of having grandchildren. He wipes the sudden flow of perspiration caused by the news... and looks at

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the people around him. He is struggling and suffering.

His daughter moans: "Father. . . forgive me. . . and bless me. . ." and she throws herself at his feet.

Philip caresses her brown hair {absent-mindedly} and clears his throat. At last he speaks: "One forgives children who commit sins. . . By consecrating yourself to the Master you are not committing a sin. . . and your poor father can but say to you: 'May you be blessed'. . . Ah! my daughter!. . . How sweet and terrible is the will of God!" and he bends, lifts his daughter, embraces her, kissing her forehead and hair. He then moves towards Jesus and says to Him: "Here. I am her father. But You are her God! Your right is stronger than mine. . . Thank You, Lord, for. . . for the joy that. . ." and he cannot go on. He kneels at Jesus' feet and bends to kiss them moaning: "No grandchildren. . . never. . . My dream!. . . The smile of my old age!. . . Forgive my tears, my Lord. . . I am a poor man. . ."

"Stand up, My dear friend. And be happy because you are giving the early flowers to the angelical flowerbeds. Come. Come here, between Me and My Mother. Let us hear from Her how this happened, because I can assure you that I am neither to be blamed or praised for it."[133]

Mary explains: "I know very little Myself. We women were speaking to one another, and as often is the case, they were asking Me about my virginal vow. They were also asking Me what future virgins will be like, which work and which glory I foresaw for them. And I was replying as best I could. . . And I foresaw for them a life of prayer and of relief to the suffering caused to My Jesus by the world. I said: 'It will be the virgins who will support the apostles and will purify the foul world, clothing and scenting it with their purity; they will be the angels singing praises to cover up the blasphemy of the world. And Jesus will be happy, and will grant graces to the world and will have mercy on it, thanks to these lambs spread among wolves. . .' and I was saying other things. Jairus' daughter then said to Me: 'Give me a name, Mother, for my future as a virgin, because I cannot allow any man to have pleasure out of my body, which was revived by Jesus. This body of mine belongs to Him only until its flesh {is} in the grave and its soul in Heaven,' and Anna-Leah said: 'That is what I also felt I should do. And now I feel happier than a swallow, because all ties are broken.' It was then that your

133. In other words: "I am not responsible for this in any way."

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daughter, Philip, said: 'I will be like you, too: a virgin for ever!' Her mother — there she is coming — pointed out to her that one cannot take such a decision just like that. But she would not change her mind. And when she was asked whether it was an old idea she had, she replied 'no' and to those who asked how she got it, she said: 'I do not know. It was as if a beam of light had pierced my heart and I understood of what love I love Jesus.'"

Philip's wife asks him: "Have you heard that?"

"Yes, woman. Our flesh moans. . . whereas it should rejoice because this is its glorification. Our heavy flesh has procreated two angels. Do not weep, woman. You said yourself that He has crowned you. . . A queen does not weep when she receives her crown. . ."

But Philip is weeping as well, and many more, both men and women, are weeping, now that they are all gathered on the terrace. Mary of Simon has burst into unrestrained weeping in a corner. Mary of Magdala is weeping in another corner, pulling and twisting her linen dress, from which she {absent-mindedly} tears off the threads trimming the hem. Anastasika is weeping and she tries to conceal her sorrowful face with her hand.

"Why are you weeping?" asks Jesus.

No one replies.

Jesus calls Anastasika and asks her once again. She replies: "Because, Lord, for the nauseating pleasure of one night only, I lost the possibility of being one of Your virgins."[134]

"*Every condition is good, if one serves the Lord in it.* In the future Church both virgins and matrons will be required. They are both useful for the triumph of the Kingdom of God in the world and for the work of their brother priests" (*Poema*, V, p.478-480).

3. *Mary, "Prototype" of the Church*

Besides being Mother and Queen of the Church, Our Lady is also the "Prototype" of the Church. She is the most complete model of the Church. She is the ideal that the Church continually strives for so that each of its

134. Anastasika had been married legitimately but her lewd husband divorced her shortly after marrying her. (See *Poema*, V, p.385-386 & 435.) [Editor].

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members may attain to the perfection which Mary, a totally unique member of the Church, has already attained.

Mary is the Church's model in every way, particularly holiness and the practice of virtues. "Only God's holiness was greater than Mary's" (*Poema*, X, p.351). "Next to Christ, Mary was the holiest of all creatures" (*ibid.*, p.354).

[Jesus speaking.] "Mary was the holiest of all the creatures that lived on earth. Her holiness was not like molecules of perfume escaping a closed vase. Rather, it was like a bright star giving off supernaturally powerful rays and ethers" (*Quad. '43*, p.591 [Nov 28]).

[Jesus speaking again.] "For humanity as a whole as well as for individuals, the new life begins with Mary. Learn from Her virtues and Her lifestyle. She has experienced every aspect of grief: She even had to forgive Her Son's murderer. Your salvation is found in Her grief. " (*Poema*, IX, p.309).

Mary lived "on earth with Her soul always hovering in Heaven" (Nov. 6, 1944).

Mary is the synthesis of Christian perfection, and in a very particular way, the Church's model of love of God and love of neighbour.

a) *Mary, Model of Love for God.*

Mary's entire life was an act of perpetual adoration of God. Maria Valtorta comments:

I have seen many creatures worship their Saviour Jesus after being healed or converted by Him. None of them, however, adores Him in remotely the same way as Mary does. Even the most passionate among them fail to worship as well as Mary. The same is true of those who are so moved by love that they do not realize that their gestures are exaggerated. Although their love is total, they still love Jesus only as creatures, who always lack something to be perfect. As for Mary, I dare say that *Her love is divine. Her love is greater than that of any other creature.* Oh! She is really God's faultless Daughter! That is why She can love Him so well. . . This reminds

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me of what mankind lost because of original sin. . . It reminds me of what Satan robbed us when he led our first parents astray. He took away from us the capacity to love God as Mary loved Him. . . Satan took away from us the capacity to love well. . . (*Poema*, VII, 1331).

[The Blessed Virgin is now speaking candidly to Mary of Clopas.] "Oh! Mary! I thank the Most High for one thing above any other: *that He granted Me to reach perfect love.* My love is as perfect as a creature can have. Because of that love, I can heal and strengthen My heart, saying: 'His grief and Mine are useful to My brothers. Blessed be My grief!' If I didn't have such love for My neighbour. . . I couldn't bear the thought that they will put Jesus to death. . ."

"What kind of love do You have?" [Mary of Clopas asks]. "What kind of love do we need to have to say things like that? So you wouldn't run away with your own child, defending him and telling your neighbour: 'My first neighbour is my son, and I love him above anything else?'"

"The One we must love above everything else is God."

"Jesus *is* God."

"He does the Father's will and so do I. What kind of love do I have? What kind of love do we need to have to say things like that? *This kind: to be fused with God. A total union, total abandonment, losing ourselves in Him*, becoming a part of Him, like your hand is part of you and does what your head tells it to. That is the kind of love I have, the kind of love we must have so we always do God's will with good will" (*Poema*, VI, p.1098-1099).

Doing God's will faithfully and constantly, that was the source of Mary's calm and unalterable serenity.

"Where do I find peace of mind?" [The Virgin Mary is again speaking to Mary of Clopas.] "In doing God's will. My serenity? In doing God's will. If I had to do a man's will, I might be uneasy: even the wisest man can make mistakes when he imposes his will. Not so with God! . . . The One who has imposed His will on me, the One I serve lovingly and trustingly, He will help Me when that hour comes . . ." (*ibid.*, p.967- 968).

"Mary never separated from God. Their spirits remained fused in an embrace of love which was crowned in Heaven. That union was Mary's main source of strength. As a daughter of Adam, that is the way She found the breastplate that made Her invulnerable to the Tempter's bite" (*Quad. '43*, p.306 [Sept. 5]).

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Saint John said to Mary:

"Singlehandedly, You have loved God more than all the High Priests and all the others at the Temple put together over the centuries. Your love is ardent and most pure" (*Poema*, X, p.335).

Mary's love for Her dear Son Jesus!. . . It is simply ineffable. How graceful is the episode in which Mary gives Jesus

the winter clothing She had prepared for Him. Thick and warm, the coats are water repellent and will protect Jesus from the cold . . . .

"That was a lot of work, Mother!" [Jesus exclaims.] "I still had those from last winter . . . ."

". . . I didn't waste anything," [Mary replies]. "The coat I am wearing is Yours. I shortened it and dyed it over again. It is still good enough for Me. . . but not for You. *You are Jesus!*. . ."

"You are Jesus." Simple words, but it is impossible to express all that they mean. "You are Jesus." These words contain all of Mary's love as Jesus' Mother, His disciple, the Israelite woman of old waiting for the promised Messiah, and the Israelite woman of the blessed age that possesses Jesus. If She had prostrated Herself to worship Her Son as God, that gesture would have been a limited appearance of veneration. Her words, however, are greater than formal adoration through knees that bend, a deep bow, or a forehead that touches the ground. Mary's whole being — Her flesh, blood, thinking, heart, spirit, and love — quivers in Her words as She worships the God-Man totally and perfectly" (*Poema*, VII, p.1330-1331).

Even the most common and ordinary tasks were lovingly executed by Mary. Nonetheless, Her three ecstasies of love and three kisses of love are noteworthy.

The Three Ecstasies of Love

Mary tells us about Her own ecstasies.

"When I conceived My Son, that was an ecstasy. When I gave birth to Him [in the humble cave of Bethlehem], that was an even greater ecstasy. When I passed from Earth to Heaven, that was the ecstasy of ecstasies. But during the Passion, no ecstasy whatsoever made the horror of My grief bearable" (*Poema*, X, p.351).

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The first was the Father's kiss. It happened at the very moment He created the soul of His favourite Daughter and breathed it into a body, preserving Her from original sin and filling Her with graces. The second kiss was from the Son, when His heart began beating besides Hers. The third kiss was from the Holy Spirit, who is the Love of the Father and the Son. He gave Her this kiss of love when She was assumed body and soul into Heavenly glory (*ibid.*, p.353). Jesus fittingly said that "Her charity is as vast as the sea" (*Poema*, IV, p.740).

The Virgin, God's Lover, can suitably address all members of the Church this flaming exhortation:

"O Christians, attain total love. Let everything that is earthly lose its value. Admire God alone. When you reach such modesty in your desires, you will be rich beyond compare. God will take care of your spirit, first to teach it, and then to take it. With your spirit, you will soar towards the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. You will know Them and love Them in everlasting happiness. You will possess the Trinity's graces for your brothers. We are never as active for our brothers as when we no longer are in their midst, but are light that has joined God's Light" (*Poema*, X, p.353).

b) *Mary, Model of Love for the Neighbour.*

Mary's love for the neighbour was proportional to Her love for God, whom She loved in Her neighbour. Her life was perfumed with love, goodness, and gentleness toward Her neighbour.

[Jesus speaking.] "Although Mary's meditation, prayer and sweet conversations with God soared, as you can imagine, to great heights, She would turn away from them to take care of Her neighbour. She would do so without losing sight of God, and without making Her fellow human beings feel that they disturbed Her. Take Mary as your model" (*Quad. '43*, p.53 [June 13]).

"While ordinary things is what life is made of," [Jesus said,] "when they are clothed with love, they become sublime. My Mother was

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worthy of the Angels' admiration in the few seconds when She said: 'Let it be done to Me as you have said.' She was just as greatly to be admired when She performed the humble work of women. She contemplated the highest mysteries and meditated on the grief She would experience with Her Child. Yet, She would turn away from this and lovingly wash My swaddling clothes, lovingly cook meals for Her husband, lovingly clean up Her house, and lovingly pay attention to Her neighbours' needs. Love is forever ready, flexible, kind, joyful, generous, patient..." (*Quad.* '43, p.19 [June, 2]).

In *Il Poema dell'Uomo-Dio* we can find various fragrant flowers of love of neighbour. Let us limit ourselves to a few of the most moving ones.

In the third year of His Public Ministry, Jesus is in Gethsemane with His Mother Mary. They are talking. Little Marziam runs in and tells the Blessed Virgin:

"There is a woman... A woman who wants to see You, Mother... She says that she met You in Bethlehem... Her name is Naomi."

"I met so many women, then! But let us go..."

They arrive at the little opening where the house is. A group of people are waiting for Jesus and as soon as they see Him they prostrate themselves. But a woman stands up at once and runs towards Mary throwing herself at Her feet and calling Her by Her name.

"Who are you? I do not remember you. Stand up."

The woman stands up . . . . [The Apostles and the others] all gather round her to listen to her.

"You do not remember me, o Mary of Bethlehem. But for thirty-one years I have remembered Your name and Your face as the symbols of mercy. I had come from far, too, from Perga, because of the Edict. And I was {with child}. But I was hoping to get back home in time. My husband was taken ill on the way and he languished and died in Bethlehem. I gave birth to my child twenty days before he died. And my crying pierced the sky and {dried up} my breast and turned my milk into poison. And both my son and I became covered with blisters... And we were thrown into a cavern and left there to die... Well... You were the only one who came, cautiously, now and again, for a full month, and You brought us food and treated our sores, weeping with me and suckling my child, who owes his life to You... You risked being stoned because they called me 'the leper

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woman'. . . Oh! My sweet star! I have not forgotten that. I went away when I was cured. And at Ephesus I heard of the slaughter. I looked for you for such a long time. I could not believe that You had been killed with Your Son during that dreadful night. But I never found You. Last summer a man from Ephesus heard Your Son, he found out who He was, he followed Him for some time and was with Him and with other people at the Tabernacles. . . And when he came back, he told me. And I came to see You, Holy Mother, before I die. I came to bless You for every drop of milk You gave my John, depriving Your blessed Son of it. . ." The woman is weeping, in a respectful attitude, with her head slightly bent, holding Mary's arms with her hands. . .

"One should never refuse to feed a baby, sister. And. . ."

"Oh! no. I cannot be Your sister! You are the Mother of the Saviour, and I was a poor forlorn woman, far from her house, a widow with a suckling, whose breast was as dry as a torrent in summer. . . I would have died without You. You gave me everything and I was able to go back to my brothers, who are merchants in Ephesus, thanks to You."

"We were two mothers, two poor mothers, with two babies, in the wide world. It was your grief to be a widow, and Mine to be pierced because of My Son, as old Simeon told Me in the Temple. I only did My duty as a sister by giving you what you no longer had. Is your son alive?"

"He is over there. And Your holy Son cured him this morning. May He be blessed for that!" And she prostrates herself before the Saviour shouting: "John, come and thank the Lord."

A man, of the same age as Jesus, leaves his companions and comes forward. He is strong and his face is honest, even if he is not handsome. But the expression of his deep eyes is beautiful.

"Peace to you, brother of Bethlehem. Of what disease did I cure you?"

"Of blindness, Lord. I had lost one eye, and I was about to lose the other one. I was the head of the synagogue, but I could no longer read the Sacred Rolls."

"You will now read them with greater faith."

"No, Lord. I will now read You. I want to remain with You as one of Your disciples, without setting up a claim for the milk that I sucked from the breast that nourished You. The days of one month are nothing and cannot create any tie, but the mercy of Your Mother

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in the past and Yours this morning are everything."

Jesus addresses the woman: "And what do you say?"

"That my son will belong to You twice. Accept him, Lord. And the dream of poor Naomi will be fulfilled."

"Very well. You will belong to the Christ." And turning towards His Apostles He says: "Receive your companion in the name of the Lord."

The proselytes are elated with emotion. All the men would like to remain, but Jesus says firmly: "No. You will remain what you are. Go back to your homes, preserve your faith and wait for the hour to be called. And may the Lord be always with you. Go."

"Shall we find You here again?" they ask.

"No. Like birds that fly from branch to branch, I move around without resting. You will not find Me here. I have no itinerary and no dwelling place. But if it is just, we shall meet again and you will hear Me. Go. Let the woman stay with the new disciple."

And He enters the house followed by the women and the apostles who are deeply moved and comment on the episode which they ignored so far, and on *Mary's sublime charity.*

[Later,] Jesus goes to Bethany at a good pace. Simon Zealot and Marziam are beside Him. They are both very happy to have been chosen for that visit. Marziam, who is now in better spirits, asks many questions about the woman who came from Ephesus and whether Jesus was aware of the fact.

"I did not know," [Jesus replies]. *"The kind actions of My Mother are countless* and are done in such mild silence that they are generally unknown."

"But the episode is really beautiful" says the Zealot (*Poema,* V, p.430-433).

Who would disagree?

Another charity-filled episode pictures Mary receiving the visit of Judas of Kerioth, in Nazareth. Judas, having arrived at the door of the humble house, knocks for a while... but no one answers. Alpheus of Sarah notices him and says:

"You can knock as much as you want, but Mary's out. She's with a poor old woman who's dying. She was called over in the third watch..."

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"But I've *got* to talk to Her" (*Poema*, VI, p.1004).

Alpheus courteously runs to tell Mary that someone is looking for Her. Annoyed that Alpheus saw him, Judas exclaims:

"Nothing ever goes well for me!" He then utters a string of reproaches to Nazareth, the villagers, Mary of Alpheus, and even Mary's charity for the woman who is dying and the dying woman herself.

He is still making reproaches when the dining-room door swings open. Mary stands on the threshold, in front of the garden. She is very pale and sad. "Judas!" "Mary!" They speak at the same time.

"I will open the door for you. All Alpheus said to Me is: 'Go home. Someone's asking for you.' So I hurried over, especially since the poor old woman does not need Me anymore. She won't suffer anymore. She died because of her evil son. . ."

While Mary is speaking, Judas runs along the trail and comes back in front of the house. . . Mary opens for him.

"Peace to you, Judas of Kerioth. Come in."

"Peace to you, Mary."

Judas hesitates somewhat. Mary, while serious, remains kind.

"I knocked for a long time at dawn."

"Last night, a son made his mother's heart burst. . . They came to get Jesus, but He was not here anymore. Same thing for you. Jesus is not here. You came too late."

"I know He isn't here."

"How do you know? You just arrived. . ."

"Mother, I want to be honest with You since You're so good. I've been here since yesterday. . ."

"Why didn't you come then? Your companions came every Sabbath except once. . ."

"Hey! I know. I went to Capernaum and couldn't find them."

"Don't lie, Judas. You never went to Capernaum. Bartholomew stayed there all that time and he never saw you. He arrived here only yesterday, but you were here. . . so. . . Why do you lie, Judas? Don't you know that lying is the first step towards theft and murder?. . . Look at poor Esther. Her son's behavior grieved her so much that she died. Do you know how Samuel, her son, started on his way to become the shame of Nazareth? Little lies at first, and then bigger and bigger ones. . . After that, he ended up doing all

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the rest. You are an Apostle of the Lord; do you want to imitate Samuel? Do you want to kill your mother with grief?"

Mary made her rebuke slowly, in a low voice, but She hit the nail on the head. Judas does not know what to say. He suddenly sits down, with his head in his hands.

Mary looks at him and says: "Well? Why did you want to see Me? When I was attending to poor Esther, I was praying for your mother. . . and for you. . . because I feel sorry for both of you, though for different reasons."

"Well, then, if You feel sorry for us, forgive me."

"I never held a grudge" (*Poema*, VI, p.1004-1005).

With motherly love Mary exhorts the treacherous Apostle to repent and have pity on his mother who is tortured by his very ill behavior. She weeps and concludes:

"I guess it is silly of Me to expect pity from you. You don't have any for your own mother!. . . Well, then, it's settled! In one fell swoop you will pierce both of us, Her and me. You poor son, the prayers of two mothers are not enough to save you!. . ." (*ibid.*, p.1007).

Mary sent Judas off to a room to rest. Though She had kept watch all night and was grieved, She lovingly prepared Judas something to eat (*ibid.*, 1008).

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III. THE REMARKABLE *PRIVILEGES* OF MARY

God, in His inexhaustible generosity, lavished remarkable *privileges* on Mary, to enable Her to perform Her unique *functions*. Those privileges adorned Her whole life on earth, from the first moment to the last, so as to make it God's masterpiece.

From *the first instant of Her life*, Mary was the *Immaculate*. As opposed to Adam's other descendants through ordinary generation, She was preserved from original sin. It follows that She was preserved also from the impulse of concupiscence, which causes actual sins.

Throughout Her entire life on earth, Mary, by a unique privilege, *always remained a virgin*: before, during, and after giving birth.

At the end of Her life on earth, as opposed to every other human being, She was assumed, body and soul, into Heaven's glory.

Thus the Immaculate Conception, virginal Motherhood, and Assumption are three privileges granted to Mary only. Valtorta illustrated these three extraordinary privileges remarkably well.

1. The Immaculate Conception

This privilege, granted to Mary at the first moment of Her life, is highly meaningful since it sets the tone for Her entire life. All of Maria Valtorta's writings, both published and unpublished, are eloquent on this subject.

Jesus said to the visionary:

"To speak of the conception of Mary, the Immaculate, means to {plunge into} the sky, light, love" (*Poema*, I, 29).

To plunge into the *sky*: a most pure, unlimited sky... To plunge *into the light*: a splendid, infinite light without

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the least trace of a shadow. To plunge *into love*: into an intoxicating, ravishing, divine love.

We will plunge into the sky, this ocean of light and of love, as we consider the remarkable privilege of the Immaculate Conception from three points of view: *in itself, in its foundations* and *in its consequences.* But first, some preliminaries.

a) *Preliminaries*

The Preliminaries pertain to four things:

i) original sin;
ii) Mary's obligation to contract original sin;
iii) Mary's extraordinary privilege in being preserved from original sin (preserving Redemption);
iv) was Mary aware of this privilege before the Annunciation?

i) *Original sin*

To make things clear, it might be good to distinguish between the original sin which *Adam and Eve committed*, and the original sin which *we all inherited* from them.

Adam's and Eve's Original Sin

First I must say that God granted our first parents three kinds of gifts.

1.- *natural* gifts: a body and a rational soul. Of course, these were essential for Adam and Eve to be human beings.

2.- *preternatural* gifts, however, were not necessary for them to be human beings, but they did supplement their human nature. The preternatural gifts were:

— *immortality* of the body and immunity to diseases;

— *immunity to concupiscence* (in other words, immunity to the excessive tendency to be aroused by what they

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perceived through the senses. Sinlessness would have been impossible without this kind of immunity);

— an abundance of *infused knowledge* to match their high state of sinlessness.

3.- *supernatural* gifts: sanctifying grace (which is a participation in the divine nature) with its own kind of virtues and infused gifts.

As a result of original sin, our first parents lost the supernatural and preternatural gifts, for both themselves and their descendants. They retained only the natural gifts (a rational soul and a body).

"Humanity," [Maria Valtorta writes,] "was deprived of all that it had spontaneously despised: grace, integrity, immortality, knowledge" (*Lezioni sull'Epistola di Paolo ai Romani* [A Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans], p.141).

The question now arises: what kind of sin was Adam and Eve's original sin? St. Thomas Aquinas answered this question. He maintained that there were "many deformities[135] in the sin of our first parents, viz., pride, disobedience, gluttony, and so forth."

In other words, it was not a simple sin, but a *complex* one. This is precisely what Maria Valtorta teaches in her writings.

According to her, the various disorders of Adam and Eve's original sin were: *pride* (wanting to be like God through the communication of life to others); *disobedience* (disobeying God's command under the impulse of pride); "*gluttony*" or concupiscence of the spirit (wanting to know the mystery of the transmission of life); and *lust* (the "gluttony" of sexual pleasure).

We must note along with Valtorta the sequence in which these disorders followed one another in the original sin of our first parents.

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135. "fuerunt plures deformitates" (*Summa theologica*, I-II, q.82, a.2, ad 1; English Translation: New York, Benziger Brothers, 1947. Vol. I, p. 957).

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"[Adam and Eve] committed their first act against love [for God] through pride, disobedience, defiance [towards God], doubt [concerning the foundations of His precept and authority], revolt [against God's precept], the lust of their spirit, and, *last of all*, the lust of the flesh. I have said: '*last of all.*'[136] Some think, on the contrary, that the lust of the flesh was the first act. No.

". . . [Adam and Eve] sinned *first of all against God*, when they wanted to be like Him. They wanted to be 'God' in the knowledge of good and evil. They wanted to be absolutely free to act at will, according to their own pleasure, with no regard for God's advice and law. That was illicit.

"*Then they sinned against love* when they loved themselves in a disorderly fashion. They denied God the reverential love that is due to Him. They put their own egos in the place of God. In so doing, they despised their eventual neighbour — their own offspring — bequeathing to them a hereditary fault and condemnation.

"*Last of all, they sinned against their dignity as royal creatures.* They had received the gift of perfect mastery of the senses. There could be no sin of the senses as long as they remained in the state of Grace and the other states resulting from it [the gift of integrity]. Though they could be tempted, the sin of sensuality could not be consummated as long as innocence lasted and, due to innocence, reason's control over the senses" (*Lezioni sull'Epistola di Paolo ai Romani* [A Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans], p.138-139).

In short, then, this is what Adam and Eve's original sin was:

"the first link of the chain by which the Word of the Father was dragged to death, the Divine Lamb to the slaughter-house" (*Poema*, I, 118-119).[137]

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136. The Holy Spirit is speaking. [Editor.]

137. Valtorta's interpretation of Adam and Eve's original sin is founded: 1) on the biblical text; 2) on some ancient rabbinical interpretations; and 3) on patristic literature (early Church Fathers in both the East and the West). It has been adopted by a fair number of famous exegetes and writers in our own time.

1) It is an interpretation *founded on the text of Genesis*, since it is implied or insinuated in Genesis. "Both the Bible and human experience show that pride and sensuality go hand in hand. As a reflection attributed to Saint Augustine has it, what begins in the spirit ends in the flesh. Furthermore, it seems that pride of the spirit hurls its victims into sexual permissiveness. Whoever tries to be an angel, especially a rebel

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angel, becomes a beast" (Professor J. Coppens, in *Ephem. Theol. Lov.*, 24 [1948], p.396) Eve's sin began in her spirit (the pride of becoming "like God, knowing good and evil") and consummated itself in the flesh. Adam's love for Eve was instrumental in his sin — as Saint Augustine pointed out (*De Genesi ad litteram* [*Concerning Genesis*] 42, PL 34, 452-454).

The matter in hand, then, is disorderly love not at all in harmony with the supreme love owed to God. Adam and Eve's love was carnal and illicit, since it did not heed God's commandment. What caused Adam's original sin was precisely an excessive love for Eve. After they sinned, "the eyes of them both were opened: and when they perceived themselves to be naked," they covered themselves (Gen. 3:7; [Douay]). In other words, they were troubled and felt an imbalance in the area of sexuality: this links original sin to lust. The fact that God inflicted a greater punishment on the woman than on the man, and the very nature of this punishment ("In sorrow shall you bring forth children, . . . and [the man] shall have dominion over you" [Gen 3:16; Douay]) seem to indicate the nature of the fault.

2) It is an interpretation *founded on a few ancient rabbinical traditions* (see J. Coppens *La connaissance du Bien et du Mal et le Péché du Paradis* [*The Knowledge of Good and Evil, and Sin in the Garden of Eden*], Bruges, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1948, p.24).

3) It is an interpretation *founded on eastern and western patristic literature.* Among the Eastern Fathers we find St. Justin, St. Epiphanius, St. Gregory of Nyssa, Clement of Alexandria, St. Maximus the Confessor, and St. John Damascene. Among the Western Fathers: St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, and St. Isidore. Among medieval writers: Alcuin, a Medieval Anonymous, St. Bernard, Hugo of Saint- Victor, Duns Scotus, and the blessed John Ruysbroek (see Coppens, *op.cit.*; *Ephem. Theol. Lov.*, 24 [1948], p.402-408).

On the other hand, Father Felix Asensio, S.J. (*Tradicin sobre un pecado sensual en el Paraso?* [*Tradition about a Sensual Sin in the Garden of Eden?*], in *Gregorianum* 30 [1949], p.490-520; 31 [1950], p.35-62, 162-191) expresses the opinion that none of the Fathers mentioned by Coppens, whether in the East or the West, would sufficiently prove the legitimacy of an interpretation of original sin in terms of sexuality.

In view of a fair judgment, it is necessary to be aware of original sin's *complexity* (its multiple deformity), as it appears in Valtorta's writings. *Pride* (the desire to be like God in determining good and evil) led our first parents to *disobey* the divine commandments. This disobedience immediately resulted in the loss of integrity (the revolt of the flesh against the spirit) followed by sexual sin.

4) Finally, it is an interpretation *adopted by a fair number of famous exegetes and modern writers.* Among exegetes, there are professor Joseph Coppens (of the Catholic University of Louvain, in the two previously mentioned works) and Father Emanuel Testa, O.F.M., in [*The Holy Bible*], under the direction of Most. Rev. Salvatore Garofalo, *Genesi* (Introduction — Primitive History), Turin-Rome, 1968, p. 307ff; p. 318ff). Among writers, there are Jean Guitton of the French Academy, in "*Le développement des idées dans l'Ancien Testament* [*The Development of Ideas in the Old Testament*]," (in *La pensée moderne et le catholicisme*, issue #9, Aix-en- Provence, 1947, p.89-130), and Louis Bouyer, Oratorian, in his work *Le trône de la Sagesse*, Paris, Cerf, 1957, p.21. [English Translation: *Woman and Man with God. An Essay on the Place of the Virgin Mary in Christian Theology and its Significance for Humanity.* London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1960, p.58.; republished under the title *The Seat of Wisdom. An Essay on the Place of the Virgin Mary in Christian Theology*, N.Y., Random, 1962 (Panther Books), p.5-8.]

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"Inherited" Original Sin

This is original sin as it is transmitted to all of Adam and Eve's descendants through bodily generation. It consists essentially in the deprivation of sanctifying grace. (Adam would have transmitted this grace had he not lost it for both himself and his descendants, as a result of original sin.)

"As head of the human family, Adam passed on his infirmities ['as an inheritance'] to his descendants. It is the same phenomenon as a man with genetic defects passing on his infirmities to his children" (*Lezioni sull'Epistola di Paolo ai Romani* [A Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans], p.141).

"Although [baptismal] Grace does not cancel all the terrestrial consequences of [original] Sin . . ., it gives you the hope of Heaven, which is a strong help to bear with today's suffering . . . . Grace helps you to resist temptations and to master your instincts, through the supernatural help dispensed by Christ's merits and the Sacraments which He instituted" (*ibid.*, p.145).

Against eventual objections, we must recall that "humanity wounded itself consciously and deliberately" (*ibid.*, p.145). It must, therefore, blame itself for the consequences of such a wound.

ii) *The Obligation under which Mary was to Contract Original Sin*

Since Adam and Eve were tainted roots, they generated tainted children. Now, Mary said to John the Apostle:

"I was born humanly," (*Poema*, X, p.282)

She was born as any other human being, descending as She did from Adam as any one of us (through natural generation). Therefore, as all of us, She should have contracted the original fault which Adam, the head of the human family, committed with Eve's collaboration.

[Jesus speaking.] "Only a special decree of God's will prevented Mary from being like all other creatures that descend from Adam's

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contaminated stock. According to the law of nature, She ought to have been no different since She was born of a man and a woman joined in matrimony. She would have been part of the great lineage of the just, as many others in the Old Testament, but nothing more" (*Quad. '43*, 133-134 [Aug. 16]).

If, then, She did not contract original sin, it means that She was preserved from it. I must now say a few words on *preserving Redemption.*

iii) *Preserving Redemption*

Preserving redemption is exclusive to the Blessed Virgin. It is a variant of redemption. Normally, as is the case for all of Adam's ordinary descendants, we deal with *liberating* redemption. In this case, the merits flowing from Redemption — already wrought on Calvary — free human beings from the sin in which they have already fallen. The excellence of *preserving* redemption, however, is much greater. Mary was *preserved* from falling, *before* redemption could occur, and *with a view to Her cooperating with it.*

Oddly enough, many distinguished medieval theologians (including Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Bonaventure) failed to understand Redemption or salvation in any way other than *liberating* Redemption. In like manner, the Virgin Mary, before reaching the age of three, could not understand Redemption other than *liberating.* That is what *Il poema dell'Uomo-Dio* discloses. One day, little Mary told Her mother that She desired to remain a *Virgin.* She went on to say:

"I would also like to be a sinner, a *big sinner*, if I were not afraid of offending the Lord. . . Tell Me, {mommie}, can one be a sinner out of love of God?"

"But what are You saying, my dear? I don't understand You."

"I mean: to commit a sin in order to be loved by God, Who becomes the Saviour. Who is lost, is saved. Isn't that so? I would like to be saved by the Saviour to receive His loving look. That is

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why I would like to sin, but not to commit a sin that would disgust Him. How can He save Me if I do not get lost?"

Anne is dumbfounded. She does not know what to say.

Joachim helps her. He has approached them walking noiselessly on the grass, behind the low hedge of vine-shoots. "He has saved You beforehand, because He knows that You love Him and You want to love Him only. So You are already redeemed and You can be a virgin as You wish" says Joachim.

"Is that true, daddy?" Mary embraces his knees and looks at him with Her clear blue eyes, so like Her father's and so happy because of this hope She gets from Her father.

"It is true, my little darling. Look! I was just bringing You this little sparrow, that at its first flight landed near the spring. I could have left it there but its weak wings did not have enough strength to fly off again, and its tiny legs could not hold it on to the slippery moss stones. It would have fallen into the water. But I did not wait for that. I took it and now I am giving it to You. You will do what You like with it. The fact is that *it was saved before it fell into the danger.* God has done the same with You. Now, tell me, Mary: have I loved the sparrow more by saving it beforehand, or would I have loved it more saving it afterwards?"

"You have loved it *now*, because you did not let it get hurt in the cold water."

"And God has loved You more, because He has loved You before You sinned."

"And I will love Him wholeheartedly. *Wholeheartedly.* My beautiful little sparrow, I am like you. The Lord has loved us both equally, by saving us. . . I will now rear you and then I will let you go. And you in the forest and I in the Temple will sing the praises of God, and we shall say: 'Please send the One You promised to those who expect Him.' Oh! Daddy, when are you taking Me to the Temple?"

"Soon, my dear. But are You not sorry to leave Your father?"

"Yes, very much! But you will come. . . in any case, if it did not hurt, what sacrifice would it be?" (*Poema*, I, 47-48).

This episode about *preserving Redemption* was referred to by Christ during the second year of His Public Ministry. Jesus was speaking to a few Apostles in Gethsemane.

"One day, listen, She told Me of when She was a little girl. She

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was not yet three years old because She was not yet in the Temple, and Her heart was full of love, emanating, like flowers and olives pressed and crushed in a mill, all Her oils and perfumes. And *in a rapture of love* She said to Her mother that She wanted to be a virgin to please the Saviour more, but that She would have liked to be a sinner in order to be saved, and She almost wept, because Her mother could not understand Her and could not tell Her how it is possible to be 'pure' and a 'sinner' at the same time. Her father satisfied Her by bringing her a little sparrow, which he had saved when it was about to be drowned on the edge of a fountain. He explained *the parable of the little bird*, saying that *God had saved Her in advance* and therefore She was to bless Him twice. And the little Virgin of God, the Most Great Virgin Mary, practised Her first spiritual maternity on behalf of the little bird, which She let free when it was strong enough. But the bird never left the kitchen garden in Nazareth, where flying and twittering, it comforted the sad house and the broken hearts of Anne and Joachim, when Mary was in the Temple. It died shortly before Anne breathed her last. . . It had fulfilled its duty. . ." (*Poema*, III, p.367).

iv) *A Scholarly Question: Did the Virgin Mary Know that She had been Conceived without Original Sin?*

Our Lady Herself gave a negative answer to that question.

"I did not know I was without stain. I could not think I was. That simple thought would have been presumption and pride, because, since I was born of human parents, it was not right for Me to think that I was the Chosen One to be the Faultless One" (*Poema*, I, 111).

Only at the Annunciation did Mary, for the first time, realize that She had been immaculately conceived.[138]

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138. Maria Valtorta added the following note in D2. "For several reasons, God did not reveal it to Her before the Annunciation. To prevent Satan's inquiries was not the least of them." [This note was not included in the English translation of *Il poema dell'Uomo- Dio*. It is found only in the Italian critical edition. Editor.]

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I must add that even Her parents (Joachim and Anne) did not realize that God had granted their daughter that extraordinary privilege. Such is what *Il Poema dell'Uomo-Dio* reports. One day, Judas Iscariot asked Jesus this question:

". . . Did Joachim and Anne know that Mary was the chosen Virgin?" . . .

[Jesus replied:] "No, they did not know."

"In that case," [Judas said,] "how could Joachim say that *God had saved Her in advance?* Does that not refer to Her *privilege* over sin?"

"Yes, it does. But Joachim *spoke inspired by God, like all the prophets*. He himself did not understand the sublime supernatural truth that the Spirit spoke through his lips.[139] Because Joachim was just. So just as to deserve that paternity. And he was humble. There is no justice where there is pride. He was just and humble. He comforted his Daughter out of fatherly love. He taught Her through his wisdom of a priest, as he was such as a guardian of the Ark of God [Most Holy Mary]. As a Pontiff he consecrated Her with the sweetest title: 'The Immaculate One.' And the day will come when another grey-haired Pontiff[140] will say to the world: 'She is the Immaculate Conception' and will give this truth to the world of believers, as a dogma which cannot be refuted, so that the Most Beautiful Virgin of God, crowned with stars, clad with the rays of the moon, which are not so pure as She is, brighter than all stars, the Queen of Creation and of God, may shine, fully revealed, in the world which in those days will be sinking deeper and deeper in the grey fog of heresies and vices. Because God-King has as His Queen, in His Kingdom, Mary."

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139. St. Thomas teaches that a Prophet does not understand everything that God tells him to say (*Summa theologica,* II-II, q.173, a.4).

140. This Pontiff is Pius IX who defined the truth of the Immaculate Conception, as a faith dogma. At this time, on December 8, 1854, there was a violent storm outside of St. Peter's Basilica. "At the precise moment His Holiness was going to define the dogma, a light breeze lifted the drape in front of the great window above the altar of Capella Maria SS. della Colonna [The Chapel of Most Holy Mary of the Pillar], and a sunbeam lit up the person of the Holy Father and his pontifical throne. Many marvelled at this event because of the solemn moment when it occurred..." (see V. Sardi, *La solenne definizione del dogma dell'Immacolato Concepimento di Maria SS. [The Solemn Definition of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Most Holy Mary],* Atti e documenti [Acts and Documents], vol.2, p.428).

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After this clear explanation, Judas had another question.

"So Joachim was a prophet?"

"He was a just man," [Jesus replies to him]. "His soul repeated like an echo what God said to his soul which was loved by God" (*Poema*, III, p.373-374).

Although She was unaware of Her remarkable privilege, Mary nonetheless experienced its effects.

[Mary speaking.] "I had all the gifts of God, in My condition of Immaculate. I did not know I was such. But the gifts were active in My soul, and gave Me spiritual strength" (*Poema*, I, 211).

After these *preliminaries*, we are now ready to examine three fundamental questions in the light of Valtorta's writings: *the fact* of the Immaculate Conception, its dogmatic *foundations*, and its *consequences*.

b) *The Fact of the Immaculate Conception*

In the first volume of *Il poema dell'Uomo-Dio*, Anne told Joachim that Mary came from God rather than either of them, since He caused Mary to be "born of a barren stump." For this reason, Anne called Mary "Daughter of God." She said also that her pregnancy caused her no pain but rather gave her "peace and blessings: the fruits of God, Her true Father" (*Poema*, I, 18).

The work moves on to the privilege of the Immaculate Conception, by which Mary's soul was preserved from original sin at the very moment God created it and joined it to its body. Jesus reveals to our visionary that He — the Word — performed "the miracle of making fertile what was barren." He thus gave Himself

". . . a Mother, Who not only had the best disposition, as was natural She should have, being born of two saints [Anne and Joachim], but, unique creature, had not only a good soul as many others still have, not only a continuous increase of goodness because of Her

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good will, not only an immaculate body, but had an immaculate soul.

[Jesus still speaking.] ". . . Think what must have been the beauty of this soul which the Father looked fondly on before time existed. {It was} the delight of the Trinity, {Who} longed to adorn it with Its gifts, to {give} it to Itself. Oh! {All} Holy Mary that God created for Himself and then for the salvation of men! . . .

"The soul created to be soul of the Mother of God! When this vital spark derived from the more lively throb of the Threefold Love of the Trinity, the Angels rejoiced because Paradise had never seen a brighter [created] light. Like a petal of a heavenly rose, a mystical and precious petal, that was a gem and a flame, the breath of God descended to give life to a body quite differently than for others. It descended so powerful in its ardour that Guilt could not contaminate it, it came through the heavens and enclosed itself in a holy womb.

"The world had its Flower, but did not yet know, the true, unique Flower, that blooms eternally: lily and rose, sweet-smelling violet and jasmine, helianthus and cyclamen blended together and with them all the flowers on earth in one Flower only: Mary, in Whom every grace and virtue is gathered together.

"In April the land of Palestine looked like a huge garden and the fragrance and colours delighted the hearts of men. But the most beautiful Rose was still unknown. She was already flowering to God in the secrecy of Her mother's womb, because *My Mother loved since She was conceived*. But only when the vine gives its blood to make wine and the sweet strong smells fill the yards and the nostrils, She would smile to God first and then to the world, saying with Her most innocent smile: 'Here, the Vine that will give you the Bunch of grapes to be squeezed in the wine press, so that it will become eternal Medicine for your disease, is amongst you.' . . .

"In the meantime consider how to bear a creature free from the Stain that deprives one of God, gives the mother a superior intelligence and makes a prophetess of her, although she has conceived in a natural and human way. The prophetess of her daughter, whom she calls: 'Daughter of God.' And consider what would have happened if innocent children had been born of innocent First Parents, as God wanted.

"Man, you state that you are setting out to be 'superman,' and with your vices are *only* setting out to be *'superdemon.'* The possibility of existing and living without the contamination of Satan, leav-

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ing to God the administration of life, knowledge, and goodness, would have been the means to make you 'superman,' not wishing more than what God had given you and which was little less than infinite. And thus, in a {continuous growth} towards perfection, you would have been able to generate children, who should be men in their bodies and sons of the Intelligence in their souls: *victors, strong, giants* over Satan, who would have been vanquished so many thousand centuries before the hour, when he will be humiliated, and all his evil with him" (*Poema*, I, 19-21).

Saint John the evangelist, during a conversation with the Blessed Virgin, reminded Her that She was born without the original stain.

"I am just an uneducated fisherman. I don't know anything about doctrines and Scriptures except what the Master taught me. . . . No sin ever stained Your soul, not even that notorious sin everyone inherits from Adam. It is the common lot, but it did not touch You. *God preserved You by an exceptional, a unique privilege,* because He always destined You to become the Ark of the Word. After all, even the first Ark has always had to be most pure, even though — alas! — the things in it [the Tables of the Law] have turned cold, dry, and dead because the people of God haven't kept [the Law] as they should have (*Poema*, X, p.283-284).[141]

In the third year of His Public Ministry, Jesus spoke with a few Roman pagans in Joppa. He stated that the likeness of God in human beings is found most perfectly in the human spirit. This is because

"God . . . is a most pure {Spirit, eternal,} perfect, immutable, indefatigable in acting . . . . The spirit, created for all men by the same Source of power and {goodness}, knows no variations of the original perfections. One only is the Uncreated and Most Perfect Spirit, and it has always been such. *Three are the spirits that were created perfect* and..."[142]

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141. The Papal bull *Ineffabilis Deus,* in particular its prologue, gives precisely Mary's divine motherhood as the most appropriate reason for Her preservation from original sin and for Her holiness inferior only to God's own (see Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum* . . ., #2800-2801).

142. [The English translation of *Il poema dell'Uomo-Dio* rearranged this paragraph according to the text of the D2 manuscript. I reinserted a translation of the original

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"You are one [of them], Master," [they say to Him].

"Not I," [Jesus answers]. "In My Flesh I have the Spirit that was not created, but was generated by the Father through exuberance of Love."[143]

"Which, then?"

"The two first parents from whom the [human] race descends; they were created perfect and then they voluntarily fell into imperfection. The third one,[144] created for the delight of God and of the Universe, is too superior to the possibilities of thought and faith of the present world to be pointed out to you. . . ." (*Poema*, VI, p.741).

Thus only three people were created in perfect innocence: Adam, Eve and Mary. The first two, however, lost it; Most Holy Mary always retained it.

It is not without reason, therefore, that Our Lady made Valtorta pay attention to the uniqueness of both Christ's humanity and Hers. She said:

"I am a woman, Jesus is a man. Still, Our humanness was, and is, different from any other. This is because we were immune from sin, even original sin, and because Our relationship with the One and Triune God was unique. No other creature, past, present or future, compares with Us on those points" (*Poema*, X, p.278-279).

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manuscript in the text above. Now follows a note by Fr. Roschini. Editor.] "The spirit . . . knows no variations of the original perfections. One only is the uncreated and Most Perfect Spirit, and it has always been such" was modified as follows in D2. "The spirit, created in all men by the same Source of power and [goodness], knows no variation of the *original* perfection, but knows many of them after it is infused in the body. One only is the Uncreated and Most Perfect Spirit, and it has always been such."

143. [Again the English translation of this paragraph is done according to D2, I reinserted a translation of the original in the text above, and a note by Fr. Roschini now follows. Editor.] This entire reply was modified as follows in D2. "In My flesh I have the divine Spirit that was not created, but was generated by the Father through exuberance of Love. And I have the soul created for Me by the Father, as I am, *now*, the Man. A perfect soul as befits the God-Man. But I am speaking of other spirits." At the bottom of the page Maria Valtorta wrote: "Here Jesus speaks as *God the Word* 'through Whom all things were made,' even His human soul. Had He spoken as a *man*, He would have said that God, in other words Himself, had created *the only most perfect spirit* to join it to His flesh as the Incarnate Word in whom all forms of perfection are concentrated. Since He is speaking to Gentiles, however, He adapts His speech to their pagan ignorance." [Maria Valtorta's note at the bottom of the page is omitted in the English translation of *Il poema dell'Uomo-Dio*. Editor.]

144. An obvious allusion to His Most Holy Mother.

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God fittingly says of Most Holy Mary:

"She rolls time back to the first days. *She* gives My divine eyes the joy of contemplating a [new] Eve such as I created her, nay, even holier and more beautiful, because She is the Mother of My Word, and because She is the Martyr of the greatest act of forgiveness. . ." (*Poema*, X, p.356-357).

"Mary, the Immaculate, was never deprived of the remembrance of God, of His closeness, His love, His light, His wisdom" (*Poema*, I, 21).

c) *The Foundations for This Unique Privilege*

According to *Il poema dell'Uomo-Dio*, Saint John, the Apostle and evangelist, was aware of the remarkable privilege of the Immaculate Conception, even while the Blessed Virgin was still alive on earth. One day, Mary alluded to the end of Her life on earth. She expressed the desire that it should come to an end on the spot where Jesus ascended to the Father. At this, Saint John said to Her:

"Mother, You too will be taken up."

"No," [Mary answers]. "I am not Jesus, you know. I was born humanly."

"Yes, *but without original sin.*"

John's answer shows that he knew about the unique privilege granted to the Virgin Mary. How did he learn of it? What was his source of information?. . . Obviously Jesus, the Master. John admitted it.

"I am just an uneducated fisherman. I don't know anything about doctrines and Scriptures *except what the Master taught me.* But I am like a child because I am pure. That might be why I know more than the Rabbis of Israel do. Jesus said so: God hides those things from the wise and reveals them to the little, to the pure. That is why I think, or have a feeling, that You will be granted what Eve would have had if she hadn't sinned. Actually, what You get will be far better, because You were not the wife of Adam, a mere man, but God took You as His Spouse so You would give the Earth the new Adam that remains faithful to grace" (*Poema*, X, p.282-283).

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It is an article of faith that Mary's Immaculate Conception was revealed by God, as Pius IX solemnly defined it on December 8, 1854, in the dogmatic bull *Ineffabilis Deus*. It is established on three solid foundations (which are very well illustrated in Valtorta's writings), namely:

i) a *biblical foundation*;
ii) a *traditional foundation* (Mary, the new Eve)
iii) a *dogmatic foundation* (Mary, Mother of God).

i) *The Biblical Foundation*

The Papal Bull *Ineffabilis Deus* teaches that this remarkable mystery is founded on what is called the *proto-evangelium*: "I will put enmities between you [the diabolical snake] and the Woman, and your seed and Her Seed: She shall crush your head, and you shall lie in wait for Her heel (Gen 3:15; [Douay]). That shows that Mary is joined to Her Son (Her Seed) in the battle against, and triumph over, the diabolical snake and his works (sin and one of its consequences, death).

That enmity, in which Mary triumphs over the devil, is explicitly mentioned in *Il poema dell'Uomo-Dio*. Mary, with Christ, has "vanquished the cursed dragon" (Poema, X, 361). Because of that, She was never overcome by him nor subjected to him.

"Ever since the time I was immaculately conceived," [the Blessed Virgin explains,] "I, who am sinless, have had Satan's head under My heel" (*Quad. '43*, p.638-639 [Dec. 8]).

Mary's triumph over sin began at the very first moment of Her life. Satan's rage when the One who was to conquer him was born is noteworthy. Just before Mary's birth, a violent storm broke out, such as no one present had ever seen.

It is growing dark and the evening is preceded by a furious and very violent storm: it brings torrential rain, wind, lightning, everything, except hail, which has fallen elsewhere.

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One of the workers notices the ferocity of the gale: "It looks as if Satan has come out of Gehenna with his demons. Look at those black clouds! You can smell sulphur in the air and you can hear whistling and hisses, and wailing and cursing voices. If it is *him*, he is furious this evening!"

The other worker laughs and scoffs: "A great prey must have escaped him, or Michael has struck him with a new thunderbolt from God, and he has had his horns and tail clipped and burnt."

A woman passes by and shouts: "Joachim! It is coming. And it is happening quickly and well!" and she disappears with a small amphora in her hands.

The storm drops suddenly, after one last thunderbolt that is so violent that it throws the three men against the side wall; and in front of the house, in the garden, a black smoky cavity remains as its memory! Meanwhile a cry, one resembling the tiny plea of a little turtle-dove that for the very first time no longer peeps but cooes, is heard from beyond Anne's door. And at the same time a *huge rainbow* stretches its semicircle across the sky. . . .

"We have never seen anything like this!"

"Look, look!"

"It seems to enclose in a circle the whole of the land of Israel. And look! there is already a star in the sky while the sun has not yet set. What a star! It is shining like a huge diamond!. . ."

"And the moon, over there, is a full moon, three days early. But look how she is shining!"

The women arrive jubilant with a plump little baby wrapped in plain linens.

It is Mary. . . .

Also the women are speaking of the storm and the unusual state of the moon, of the presence of the star and the rainbow" (*Poema*, I, 25-27).

In a dictation, Jesus addresses Himself to the devil:

". . . *you are beaten, in a Woman by a Woman*" (*Poema*, I, 36).

[Jesus explains.] "The sublime victory of God over Satan's revenge was to raise the perfection of the beloved creature to a super-perfection that should annul *at least in one person* all recollection of humanity, liable to Satan's poison, so that the Son should be generated not by a man's chaste embrace, but by a divine embrace that causes the spirit to change colour in the ecstasy of the Fire" (*Poema*, I, 36).

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"Hiss, O Satan, your hatred while She comes into the world! This Child has beaten you! Before you were the Rebel, the Twister, the Corruptor, you were already beaten and She was your Conqueror. One thousand assembled armies are of no avail against your power, the arms of men fall before your scales, o Perennial One, and there is no wind capable of dispersing the stench of your breath. And yet, *the heel of this Child,* which is so rosy as to look like the inside of a rosy camellia, and is so smooth and soft that silk seems coarse in comparison, and is so small that it could enter the chalice of a tulip and make itself a tiny shoe with that vegetable satin, *that heel is crushing your head without any fear and relegates you to your den.* And Her cry causes you to flee away, although you are not afraid of armies. And Her breath purifies the world of your foul smell. You are defeated. Her name, Her look, Her purity are a lance, a thunderbolt that pierces you and demolishes you and imprisons you in your den in Hell, o Cursed One, who deprived God of the joy of being the Father *of all* men created!" (*Poema,* I, 35).

ii) *The Traditional Foundation*

Tradition provides a second foundation for the Immaculate Conception. It is the fact that Mary was the new Eve, the antithesis of Eve. Mary "rendered Eve 'null and void.' " While Eve went downhill in self-seeking, Mary retraced Eve's steps uphill in self-denial.

"I went along the road of the two sinners, but in the opposite direction," [Our Lady explained to Valtorta] (*Poema,* I, 114).

The utter contrast between Mary and Eve, as found in Valtorta's writings, is summarized in the box on next page. It can be seen there that Most Holy Mary was preserved from every single bond with Satan and, therefore, from the contamination of original sin. It follows that Mary was immaculately conceived.

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MARY	EVE
— An Angel of *light* appeared to Mary.	— The angel of *darkness* appeared to Eve.
— The Angel of Light spoke to Mary about *divine* procreation.	— The angel of darkness spoke to Eve about *human* procreation.
— Mary *obeyed* God when She consented to the proposition of the *divine messenger*.	— Eve *disobeyed* God when she believed the *seducer* (who, against God's command, proposed the mystery of human procreation).
— When Mary heard the Angel of *light*, She profoundly *humbled* Herself.	— When Eve heard the angel of *darkness* she became *proud* and craved to become like God.
— Mary *became similar to God*, because She conceived the Divine Person of the Word according to His human nature, just as the Father conceived Him according to His divine nature.	— Eve *became similar to the devil* when she fell from grace.
— Mary *remained a virgin* when She conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit.	— Eve *was violated* by the seducer spiritually and bodily.
— Mary, full of grace, *paid the price of inexpressible grief* to become the bearer of Life and Grace, both for Herself and all of humanity.	— Eve (together with Adam) *was attracted by pleasure and sinned*. She fell from grace, affecting both herself and all her descendants.

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iii) *The dogmatic foundation*

The third foundation for Mary's preservation from original sin is Her eminent dignity as Mother of God. The Mother had to be worthy of the Son Who is absolute purity. According to Valtorta, Elizabeth used that reasoning when she spoke to Mary.

". . . there is no stain in You, as God chose You for His Mother" (*Poema*, I, 138).

In virtue of Her divine motherhood, Mary became "the living Tabernacle of the Living God." This tabernacle could not fail to be very pure.

Jesus made the following remarks.

"When the time of Grace had come, God prepared His Virgin. You will readily understand that God could not dwell where Satan had put an indelible mark [original sin and its consequences]. The Power therefore took action to prepare Its future spotless tabernacle. And She, on Whom there is no stain, was conceived of two just people [Joachim and Anne], in their old age, against the common rules of procreation.[145] Who brought that soul into the embryonal flesh that rekindled the old womb of My grandmother, Anna of Aaron? . . . The Strength of God [Gabriel] has always been the victorious Archangel . . . .

"The Announcer, who was already familiar with the ways of the earth, as he had descended to speak to the Prophets, with a cry of joy took from the divine Fire the spark which was the soul of the eternal Maid and clasping it in the circle of the angelical flames of his spiritual love, brought it down on to the earth, into a house, into a womb [Anne's]. And the world, from that moment, had the Adoring Maid; and God, from that moment, could look at a spot on the earth, without feeling disgusted" (*Poema*, II, 652-653).

145. This passage is annotated as follows in D2. "Although Mary was born of a bodily union, it was 'against the common rules of procreation.' Anne had an organic problem; besides, she was too old. She could not have conceived that child without a miracle willed by God.

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d) The Consequences of Mary's Preservation from Original Sin

There are three:
i) the anticipated use of Her reason;
ii) immunity to the impulse of concupiscence;
iii) immunity to the shadow of actual sin.

i) *The Anticipated Use of Her Reason*

From the very moment of Her conception, Mary experienced sanctification from two points of view: the one negative (immunity to original sin), the other positive (the gift of sanctifying grace). In which way did the Blessed Virgin receive grace, and how was She sanctified?... Was this grace received like children (unconsciously) or like adults (consciously, with the anticipated use of Her reason, with acts of faith and love)?... Valtorta tells us that Most Holy Mary received grace in a conscious way, with the anticipated use of Her reason. Thus Jesus spoke to the Seer:

". . . My Mother *loved [God] since She was conceived*"[146] (*Poema*, I, 20).

"I said: 'Mary loved since She was conceived!' What is it that gives light and knowledge to the soul? Grace.[147] What is it that removes

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146. D2 explains as follows. "This is because She was full of grace. Grace is love. It is wisdom; it is everything. Mary, being full of grace, loved as soon as She had a soul."

147. A sheet joined to D2 has more details. "Adam and Eve, as soon as they were created, were able to love God, since they knew His perfections. Grace and the other gifts received together with life, enabled them to love Him. Mary, whose soul was full of grace, loved with Her most pure spirit as soon as She possessed that grace. *She was ahead of the time* when Her whole being would be granted all the divine gifts fully and superabundantly in view of Her eventual mission and perfection. At this time She would love with Her whole intelligence, Her whole heart, and Her whole strength.

"*Her precocious love-power* should not astonish those who meditate St. Luke's Gospel (1:44 and 1:15). John the Baptist was presanctified in his mother's womb. He was purified from original sin. Due to this, he became extraordinarily intelligent. Since he now was a creature taken up into the supernatural realm, he received the correspond-

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Grace? Original sin and mortal sin. Mary, the Immaculate, was never deprived of the remembrance of God, of His closeness, His love, His light, His wisdom. Therefore, *She was able to understand and love* when She was but flesh forming around an immaculate soul *that continued to love*" (*Poema*, I, 20-21).

"In Her humility She did not know that She possessed Wisdom before being born and that the union with Wisdom was but the continuation of the divine pulsations of Paradise.[148] She could not imagine that. And when God whispered sublime words to Her in the depths of Her heart, in Her humility She considered them thoughts of pride and raising Her innocent heart to God, She besought Him: 'Lord, have mercy on Thy Servant!'

"Oh! It is true that the True Wise Virgin, the Eternal Virgin, has had only one thought from the dawn of Her day: to raise Her heart to God from the morning of life and to watch for the Lord . . ." (*Poema*, I, 57).

John the Baptist was granted the use of his reason when sanctifying grace *freed* him from sin. How much more should the Queen of saints be granted the use of Her reason when grace *preserved* Her from original sin! Also, this gift was permanent for Mary,[149] but not for John the Baptist.

That Mary received the permanent use of Her reason from the time She was conceived is clearly demonstrated in Maria Valtorta's writings. One day, when Mary was not even three years old, She went into the garden Joachim took care of. Having picked several flowers of various kinds, She ran back to Her mother to give them to her.

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ing gift of knowledge. It follows that his intelligence was perfect. He thus recognized his Lord in Mary's womb. He rejoiced, loved his Lord, and worshipped Him. This confirmed the words of Gabriel the Archangel to Zechariah: 'John shall be filled with the Holy Spirit in his mother's womb.'"

148. This is annotated as follows in D2: "*when God created Mary's soul.*"

149. This Marian privilege has been accepted by several theologians: at first timidly, then more firmly and more widely, so that such an opinion, since the 16th century, may be said to be common (see G. Roschini, *La Madonna secondo la Fede e la Teologia* [*The Blessed Virgin According to the Faith and Theology*], vol.3, Rome, 1953, p.96).

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She has in Her hands poppies, cornflowers and other flowers that grow in cornfields, but I do not know their names. She is walking and when She is near Her mother She starts running, shouting joyfully and, like a little dove, She ends Her flight against Her mother's knees: she has opened them to receive Her. Anne has put her needlework aside so that She would not get pricked and has opened her arms to embrace Her. . . .

"{Mommie, mommie}!" The little white dove is completely in the nest of Her mother's knees, touching the short grass with Her little feet and hiding Her face in Her mother's lap, so that only Her golden hair can be seen on the nape of Her neck over which Anne bends to kiss it fondly.

Then She lifts Her head and offers Her mother flowers. They are all for Her {mommie} and of each one She tells the story She has invented.

This blue and big one, is a star which has come down from Heaven to bring the kiss of the Lord to My {mommie}. Here: kiss this little celestial flower there, on its heart, and you will see that it tastes of God.

This other one, instead, which is a paler blue, like daddy's eyes, has written on its leaves that the Lord loves daddy very much because he is good.

And this tiny little one, the only one to be found, (it is a myosote), is the one that God made to tell Mary that He loves Her.

And these red ones, does {mommie} know what they are? They are pieces of king David's dress, stained with the blood of the enemies of Israel and sown on the battlefields and the fields of victory. They originate from those strips of the heroic regal dress torn in the struggle for the Lord [2 Sam, ch. 5-8 (Vulgate: 2 Kings, ch. 5-8)].

Instead this white and gentle one, that seems to be made with seven silk cups looking up to the sky, full of perfumes, and that was growing over there, near the spring — daddy picked it for Her amongst the thorns — is made with the dress of Solomon. He wore it, so many many years before, in the same month in which his little granddaughter was born, when he walked in the midst of the multitudes of Israel before the Ark and the Tabernacle, in the splendid majesty of his robes. And he rejoiced because of the cloud which returned to encircle his glory, and he sang the canticle and the prayer of his joy [1 Kings, ch.8 (Vulgate: 3 Kings, ch.8)].

"I want to be always like this flower, and like the wise king I

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want to sing throughout My life canticles and prayers before the Tabernacle" ends Mary.

"How do You know these holy things, my darling? Who told You? Your father?"

"No. I do not know who it is. I think I have always known them. Perhaps there is one who tells Me and I do not see him. Perhaps one of the angels that God sends to speak to good people. {Mommie,} will you tell Me another story?" (*Poema*, I, 44-45).

Thus Mary told Her mother of Her resolve to remain a virgin for God, to give Herself to Him alone and to be His handmaid. We must note Mary's answer to Her mother's question "How do You know these holy things?" The Child replies: "*I think I have always known them.*" This obviously means that She did not learn them from any other human being.

Because of the anticipated use of Her reason, the Blessed Virgin cooperated in a meritorious way with Her own sanctification. Furthermore, from the very beginning of Her personal existence, She was raised to a state of union with God. That is Love's authentic reign. The Holy Spirit, 'the Soul of Her soul,' knew from the start, that He was fully Mary's Master. As far as Her will was concerned, Her soul was completely transformed in God's will. In other words, in Her will, there was nothing opposed to God's will. (See Saint John of the Cross, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book III, ch.2, #10). What is the climax for all other saints was Mary's starting point.

ii) *Immunity to the Impulse of Concupiscence*

The very fact that Mary was preserved from original sin immunized Her from the impulse of concupiscence, which is a consequence and mark of original sin. Original sin robbed us of both the supernatural gift of grace *and* the preternatural gifts, especially the gift of integrity.

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Integrity means that our capacity to be aroused by what we perceive through the senses would be totally under the control of reason. Since this is not the case for us as a result of original sin, the Christian life is a ceaseless battle between the flesh and the spirit (Gal. 5:16-25, etc.). The flesh and the spirit are like the two sides of a scale: when one goes up, the other comes down.

[The Holy Spirit is speaking to the Seer.] "Today's mankind is *not* the result of an evolution for the better, but the sorry result of an evolution for the worse. This is because Adam's fault has injured for ever the physical, moral, and spiritual perfection of the first man. This perfection has been injured to such an extent that even Jesus Christ's Passion cannot cancel all the results of [original] Sin. Although it does restore the life of grace to all the baptized, it does not take away all the scars of the great wound of original sin. In other words, bad instincts remain. These cause the ruin of those who do not love God or love Him too little. They also cause torments for the just who wish that they did not have the least thought induced by the voices of the passions and who struggle all their lives in a heroic battle to remain faithful to the Lord" (*Lezioni sull'Epistola di Paolo ai Romani* [A Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans], p.128).

During Her whole life, the Blessed Virgin, as opposed to Adam's other descendants, was never in the least tormented by carnal instincts (the impulse of concupiscence) which tortured Paul the Apostle so much (see 2 Cor. 12:7-9).

[Jesus speaking.] "In the Virgin there is no sign of this dissolved association with the Fault. Her soul appears beautiful and intact as when the Father conceived Her, gathering all graces in Her.

"She is the Virgin. She is the Only One. She is the Perfect One. The Complete One. Conceived as such. Generated as such. Remained such. Crowned such. Eternally such. . . . That is the revenge of the God Trine and One. Against creatures desecrated He raises this Star to perfection. . . . In Her there is *the absence of {bad instincts}*, the inheritance of Sin. (*Poema*, I, 37).

Elsewhere we can read:

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"I had consecrated Myself to God since My childhood, because the light of the Most High had shown Me the cause of evil in the world . . ." (*Poema,* I, 111).[150]

What was the flesh for Mary? What was it for Jesus? Jesus said that it was

"a veil of water over the triumphant spirit; a light breeze caressing the royal spirit; crystal that isolates the sovereign spirit and does not corrupt it; a thrust that lifts up and not a burden that weighs down. Such was the 'flesh' for Us. It was lighter and less tangible than a linen tunic; it was a light substance placed between the world and the superhumanized splendour of Our inner selves. It was a means for Us to perform God's will. It was nothing else" (*Poema,* IX, p.305-306).

In a graceful way, the Blessed Virgin revealed Her privilege to a repentant libertine (Aglae, a pagan). (Mary was encouraging the young woman to persevere in her repentance.)

"Do you think that only he is pure who has never known sensuality? Do you think that a soul can never again become virgin and beautiful? Oh! My daughter! Between the purity which is entirely a grace of the Lord and your heroic ascent to climb back to the summit of your lost purity, you must believe that yours is the greater. You are building it against sensuality, against need and habit. For Me it is a natural endowment, like breathing. You have to break off your thoughts, your feelings, your flesh, in order not to remember, not to desire, not to yield... I... Oh! Can a little child, a few hours old, have carnal desires? And does he have any merit thereby? The same applies to Me. I do not know what that tragic hunger is that made mankind a victim. I know but the most holy hunger for God. But you did not know it and you learned it by yourself" (*Poema,* III, p.158).

150. "Also because Her ego, free of the goad of concupiscence, was not attracted to carnal pleasures. It was attracted only to heavenly affections." (Valtorta added this comment in D2.)

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iii) *Immunity to the Shadow of Actual Sin*

Excessive inclinations and semi-deliberate venial sins (moral imperfections) are intimately linked to the impulse of concupiscence. Because of the corruption of concupiscence, while we can avoid *any single excessive inclination*, we cannot avoid them *all* at once. (See *Summa theologica*, I-II, q.74, a.3, ad 2).

The Blessed Virgin, however, was immune to the impulse of concupiscence. "Always full of grace,"[151] She was able to avoid moral imperfections all at once, not only each one in particular.

Before She was born, Her father prophesied:

"She will never sin against the Lord and to Him only She will give Her songs . . . (*Poema*, I, 18).

Different from all others, She spent Her life "on earth, with Her soul always hovering in Heaven" (*Diary*, Nov. 6, 1944). She was "the only child of mankind that always remained perfect" (*Quad. '43*, p.305 [Sept. 5]). She remained united to God, and God to Her "in an embrace of love which was crowned in Heaven" (*Quad. '43*, p.306 [Sept. 5]). On account of this She was "the holiest of all the creatures ever to live on earth" (*Quad. '43*, p.591 [Nov. 2]). She was "the Saint of saints" (*Quad. '43*, p.184 [June 19]).

"God, to reveal Himself to men in the new and complete form, which starts the Redemption era, did not select for His throne a star in the sky, nor the palace of a powerful man. {He did not want} the wings of Angels as the base of His feet; {rather,} He wanted a spotless womb.

"Also Eve had been created spotless. But she wanted to become corrupt of her own free will. Mary, Who lived in a corrupt world —

151. Quad 45-50, p.572. This passage was written sometime between September and November 1950.

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Eve was in a pure world — did not wish to violate Her purity, not even with one thought remotely connected with sin. She knew that sin exists. She saw its various and horrible forms and implications. *She saw them all*, including the most hideous one: deicide. But She knew them solely to expiate them and to be, for ever, the Woman who has mercy on sinners and prays for their redemption" (*Poema*, I, 4).

Jesus speaking. Mary is

". . . the perfect Maiden with the pure and simple heart of a dove. [She] is the One Whom years and worldly contacts do not make defiant in the cruelty of a corrupted, twisted, false spirit. Because She *does not want it*. . . . Is Her glance as an infant very different from the one you saw She had at the foot of the Cross or in the delight of Pentecost or when Her eyelids closed upon Her innocent eyes for Her last sleep? No. Here is the uncertain and astonished glance of an infant, then it will be the amazed and modest look of the Annunciation, and then the happy one of the Mother in Bethlehem, then the worshipping glance of my first and sublime Disciple, then the tormented one of the Tortured Mother on Golgotha, then the radiant glance of Resurrection and Pentecost, then the veiled look of the ecstatic sleep of the last vision. But whether it opens at the first sight, or closes tired on the last light, after seeing so *much* of joy and horror, Her eye is the clear, pure, placid piece of the sky that always shines below Mary's forehead. Wrath, falsehood, pride, lewdness, hatred, curiosity never soil it with their smoky clouds.

"It is the eye that looks at God lovingly, whether it cries or laughs, and that for God's sake fondles and forgives and bears everything, and by the love of God is rendered unassailable to the assaults of Evil, that so often makes use of the eye to penetrate the heart" (*Poema*, I, 42-43).

The list of the consequences of Mary's Immaculate Conception usually ends here. In Maria Valtorta's work, however, we can find a few other consequences which *affected even Mary's mother*, Saint Anne.

[Jesus speaking to the Seer.] "In the meantime consider how to bear a creature free from the Stain that deprives one of God, gives the mother a superior intelligence and makes a prophetess of her, although she has conceived in a natural and human way. The pro-

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phetess of her Daughter, whom she calls: 'Daughter of God'" (*Poema*, I, 21).

Another consequence for Anne was that she did not feel the burden of her pregnancy. Speaking to Joachim, she happily exclaimed:

"I do not bear Her, I have no pain. It is She who takes me on a blue flowery path, as if I were supported by holy angels and the earth was already far away. . . I have always heard women say that it is painful to conceive and to bear. But I have no pain. I feel strong, young, fresher than when I presented you with my virginity in my far away youth. Daughter of God — because this creature born of a barren stump, is more of God than ours — She gives no pain to Her mother. She only brings her peace and blessings: the fruits of God, Her true Father."

"Mary, then, we shall call Her! [Joachim exclaims] Star of our sea, pearl, happiness. The name of the first great woman in Israel [Myriam: see Exodus 15:20-21; Num. 12:1-15] " (*Poema*, I, 18).

Another time, Joachim asked Anne if she was in pain. She answered:

"No. But I can feel the great peace that I experienced in the Temple when I was granted the grace [the promise I would have a child], and which I felt once again when I knew I was {a mother}. It is like an ecstasy, a sweet sleep of the body while the soul rejoices and calms itself in a peace that has no bodily parallel. . . . If I absorb myself in this feeling, it grows more and more in strength while I enjoy it. It is as if I were ascending into the blue spaces of the sky. . . And furthermore, I don't know the reason for it, but since I have had this peaceful joy in me, I have a song in my heart: old Tobiah's song [Tobit 13: 1-23]. I think it was written for this hour. . . for this joy. . . for the land of Israel that receives it. . . for Jerusalem-sinner and now forgiven. . . But do not laugh at the frenzy of a mother. . . but when I say: 'Thank the Lord for your wealth and bless the God of centuries, that He may rebuild His Tabernacle in you,' I think that He Who will rebuild the Tabernacle of the true God in Jerusalem will be This One who is about to be born. . . And I also think that the destiny of my creature was prophesied and not the fate of the Holy City, when the song says: 'You shall shine with a bright light: all the peoples of the world will prostrate themselves before

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you: the nations will come {to you} bringing gifts: they will worship the Lord in you and will hold your land as sacred, because within you they {will} invoke the *Great Name*. You will be happy on account of your children, because they will all be blessed and they will gather near the Lord. Blessed are those who love you and rejoice in your peace...' And I am the first to rejoice, Her happy mother..."

Anne changes colour, when saying these words and she lights up like something brought from the paleness of moonlight to the brightness of a great fire and vice versa. Sweet tears, of which she is unaware, run down her cheeks and she smiles in her joy" (*Poema,* I, 23-24).[152]

Jesus explains.

"Anne suffered no pain in giving birth to her Child: it was the ecstasy of the bearer of the Faultless One" (*Poema,* I, 61).

We might wonder why Saint Anne did not have to suffer [when she gave birth], since she too was a daughter of Adam. Jesus Himself answers in a dictation about Joachim's and Anne's death.

"Someone may ask: 'Why did they not have to suffer when generating and dying, since they were children of Adam?' My answer is: 'If the Baptist, who was a son of Adam, and had been conceived with the original sin, was presanctified by Me in his mother's womb, simply because I approached her, was no grace to be granted to the mother of the Holy and Faultless One,[153] Who had been preserved by God and bore God in Her almost divine spirit, in Her most pure heart, and was never separated from Him, since She was created by the Father and was conceived in a womb, and then received into Heaven[154] to possess God in glory for ever and ever?' " (*Poema,* I, 61-62).

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152. His Eminence Alexis Cardinal Lépicier maintained that St. Anne conceived Mary without concupiscence, and furthermore, gave birth to Her without pain (*Tractatus de Beatissima Virgine Maria Matre Dei [Treatise on the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God]*, 4th ed., Paris, 1912, p.353).

153. D2 has this note: ". . . the ecstatic joy of giving birth to Mary overcame the natural sufferings of a woman giving birth. Anne gave birth without the anguish and ordinary harsh realities."

154. D2 replaces "then received into Heaven" by "at last, assumed into Heaven body and soul."

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2. Mary's Perpetual Virginity

Mary's privilege received at the beginning of Her life (the Immaculate Conception) was supplemented by another that lasted Her whole life: Perpetual Virginity. .

[Jesus speaking to Maria Valtorta.] "Rise and make haste, My little friend. I am longing to take you with Me on *the heavenly contemplation of Mary's Virginity.* You will emerge from this experience with your soul as fresh as if you too were created at the moment by the Father, a little Eve not yet aware of the flesh. You will emerge with your soul filled with light, because you will plunge into God's masterpiece. You will emerge with your whole being saturated in love, because you will have understood the degree to which God can love" (*Poema*, I, 29).

"Purity has such a value, that the womb of a creature can contain the Uncontainable One, because She possessed the greatest purity that a creature of God could have. . . . God, to reveal Himself to men in the new and complete form, which starts the Redemption era, did not select for His throne a star in the sky, nor the palace of a powerful man. {He did not want} the wings of Angels as the base of His feet; {rather,} He wanted a spotless womb" (*Poema*, I, 3-4).

"The Virgin's Virginity!. . . . . that gives ecstatic dizziness in its contemplation! What is the poor enforced virginity of a woman that no man married? Less than nothing. What is the virginity of a woman who wanted to be a virgin to belong to God, but is so in her body and not in her spirit, where she allows alien thoughts to enter and entertains allurements of human thoughts? It is a {beginning of} virginity. But still very little. What is the virginity of a cloistered nun who lives only for God? Very much. But it is never the perfect virginity when compared with My Mother's. . . .

"She is the Virgin. She is the Only One. She is the Perfect One. The Complete One. Conceived as such. Generated as such. Remained such. Crowned such. Eternally such. She is the Virgin. She is the {abyss} of intangibility, of purity, of grace that is lost in the Abyss from which it emerged: in God: most perfect Intangibility, Purity, Grace. That is the revenge of the God Trine and One" (*Poema*, I, 36-37).

Mary is called the Blessed Virgin because She was a virgin in both realms: that of the spirit and that of the

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body . . . . [We will consider Her virginity of the spirit on p.306-321, and of the body on p.321-328.]

Jesus speaking.

"A Virgin before being conceived, a virgin in the obscurity of a womb, a virgin in Her whimpers, a virgin in Her first steps, the Virgin was of God and of God only, and She proclaimed Her right, which was above the decree of the Law of Israel, and obtained from the husband given to Her by God, to remain inviolate after the wedding" (*Poema*, II, 653).

Mary's virginal purity!. . . It is beyond the most fertile imagination. Our Lord, in Valtorta's writings, compared it to Mount Hermon's white summit, to the lily that just bloomed, and to the purest pearl; but Mary, with Her virginal purity, is above all these resplendent images of unusual whiteness.

[Jesus says:] "Look and see *how pure is the peak of Mount Hermon*, wrapped as it is in the veil of wintry snow! From the Mount of Olives it seems a heap of lily petals or sea-froth. It seems an offering, as it were, lifted up to the white clouds driven by the April wind across the blue fields of the sky. Look at a *lily* when it opens the mouth of its corolla, giving off a laugh of perfume. . . How pure [the snowy mountain peak and the lily]! Even so, they are far below the purity of My Mother's womb. . . .

"Better yet, look at *the purest pearl.* It is taken from the sea, out of the shell that fathered it, to decorate a king's scepter. Its perfect, compact iridescence has never been profaned by the flesh, since it was shaped in the oyster's pearly bosom, isolated in the liquid sapphire of the sea depths. Yet, it is not as pure as the Womb that bore Me. You see, in the middle of the pearl there is a grain of sand. It is just a speck, hardly visible, but it is earthly nonetheless. In the Woman who is the Pearl of the sea, though, there is no speck of sin, not even a beginning of sin. She is the Pearl that was born in the ocean of the Trinity to bring the Second Person to the earth. She is compact around Her center, but Her center is not a seed of earthly lust. It is a spark of eternal love. Since that spark was given a perfect welcome inside of Her, the vortex of the divine Meteor issued from Her. Now that Meteor — I, the Christ, the Morning Star — is calling and drawing the children of God to Himself. That

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inviolate Purity, I give it to you as an example" (*Poema*, X, p.100-101).

a) Mary's Spiritual Virginity

Mary's spiritual virginity is even more important than Her physical virginity.

What was the origin of Mary's thirst for perfect purity so as to wholly and eternally give Herself to God? She revealed it to us through the Seer.

"I had consecrated Myself to God since My childhood, because the light of the Most High had shown Me the cause of evil in the world [original sin, sexual licentiousness] and, as far as it was in My power, I wanted to remove from Myself every trace of Satan. . . .[155] The Spirit of God had informed Me[156] of the pain of the [heavenly] Father because of the corruption of Eve, who had lowered herself to the level of inferior creatures, whereas she was a creature of grace. It was My intention to soothe that pain by remaining unprofaned by human thoughts, wishes and contacts and thus restoring an angelical purity in My body. The palpitations of My heart were to be only for Him, and only for Him My whole being. But if there was no passion of the flesh in Me, there was still the sacrifice of not being a mother" (*Poema*, I, 111).

Before Mary was three years old, She already wanted to consecrate Herself to God totally, as a virgin for life. One day, Anne, Her mother, told Her about Daniel's prophecy as to when the Christ would come. Mary replied:

"Tell Me, if I should *pray very hard, so hard*, day and night, night and day, and I wanted to *belong only to God, for all My life*, for this purpose [to hasten the coming of the Messiah], would the Eternal Father grant Me the grace of sending the Messiah to His people sooner?" (*Poema*, I, 46).

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155. "And, as far as it was in My power, I wanted to remove from Myself every trace of Satan" is modified as follows in D2. "I, therefore, wanted to ensure that I would never be, as a result of marriage, subjected to a flesh. That is why, by a precocious act of free will, I made a vow of chastity, which was unusual in those days as well as in that religion."

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Her mother giving an affirmative answer, the little girl continued:

"Then I will pray and I shall be a virgin for this."

"But do You know," [the mother asks,] "what that means?"

"It means," [the little girl replies,] "that *one does not know human love*,[157] but only the love of God. It means that one has no other thought but for the Lord. It means to remain children in the flesh and angels in the heart. It means that one has no eyes but to look at God, and ears to listen to Him, and a mouth to praise Him, hands to offer oneself as a victim, feet to follow Him fast, and a heart and a life to be given to Him."

"May God bless You! But then You will never have any children, and yet You love babies and little lambs and doves so much. . . Do You know that? A baby is for his mother like a little white and curly lamb, he is like a little dove with silk feathers and coral mouth to be loved and kissed and heard say: '{Mommie}!'"

"It does not matter. I shall belong to God. I shall pray in the Temple. And perhaps one day I will see the Emmanuel. The Virgin who is to be His Mother must be already born, as the great Prophet says, [Is. 7:14] and She is in the Temple. . . I will be Her companion. . . and maidservant. Oh! Yes. If I could only meet Her, by God's light, I would like to serve Her, the Blessed One. And later, She would bring Me Her Son, She would take Me to Her Son, and I would serve Him too. . . Just think, {mommie}!. . . To serve the Messiah!!" Mary is overcome by this thought that exalts Her and makes Her totally humble at the same time. . . . She resumes: "But will the King of Israel, the Lord's Anointed, allow Me to serve Him?"

"Have no doubts about that. Does King Solomon not say: 'There are sixty queens and eighty concubines and *countless maidens*?' [Canticle 6:7 (8)] You can see that in the King's palace there will be *countless maidens* serving the Lord."

"Oh!" [little Mary exclaims triumphantly,] "You can see then that I *must* be a virgin? I *must*. If He wants a Virgin as His Mother, it means that He loves virginity above all things. I want Him to love Me. His Maiden, because of the virginity which will make Me some-

156. Before He ever revealed to Mary that She had been preserved from original sin.

157. Elsewhere, the Blessed Virgin stated: "refusing a human marriage [was] in accordance with My vow of virginity" (*Poema*, I, 191).

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what like His beloved Mother... *This is what I want*"[158] (*Poema*, I, 46-47).

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158. Jesus forestalled any objections that might arise.

"I can already hear the comments of the {scholars} with captious objections: 'How can a little girl not yet three years old speak thus? It is an exaggeration.' And they do not consider that they make a monster of Me by ascribing adults' actions to My own childhood.

"Intelligence is not given to everybody in the same way and at the same time. The Church has fixed the age of reason at six years of age, because that is the age when even a backward child can tell good from evil, at least in basically important matters. But there are children who long before that age are capable of *discerning* and *understanding* and *wanting* with sufficiently developed discretion. Little Imelde Lambertini, Rosa da Viterbo, Nellie Organ, Nennolina, may give you confirmation, o difficult {scholars}, to believe that My Mother was able to think and speak like that. I have quoted four names at random amongst the thousands of holy children who populate My Paradise, after reasoning on earth as adults for possibly more or fewer years.

"What is reason? A gift of God. God can therefore give it as He wishes, to whom He wishes and when He wishes. Reason in fact is one of the things that make you more like God, the Intelligent and Reasoning Spirit. Reason and intelligence were graces given by God to Man in the {Garden of Eden}. How full of life they were, when Grace was alive, still intact and active in the spirit of the first two Parents!

"In the Book of Jesus Ben Sirach it is stated: 'All wisdom is from the Lord {God, and has been always with Him, and is before all time}' [Ecclesiasticus 1:1] What wisdom, therefore, would men have had, had they remained children of God?

"The gaps in your intelligence are the natural fruits of your fall from Grace and honesty. By losing Grace you banished Wisdom for centuries. As a meteor which is hidden behind masses of clouds, Wisdom no longer reached you with its bright flashes, but through mist which your prevarications have rendered thicker and thicker.

"Then Christ came and He restored Grace, the supreme gift of the love of God. But do you know how to keep this gem clear and pure? No, you do not. When you do not crush it with your individual will in sinning, you soil it with your continuous minor faults, your weaknesses, your attachment to vice. Such attempts, even if they are not a proper marriage with the septiform vice, are a weakening of the light of Grace and of its activity. And then, to weaken the magnificent light of intelligence that God had given the First Parents, you have centuries and centuries of corruption, which exert a harmful influence on the body and on the mind.

"But Mary was not only the Pure, the new Eve created for the joy of God: *She was the super Eve*, the Masterpiece of the Most High, She was the Full of Grace, the Mother of the Word in the mind of God.

"Jesus Ben Sirach says: 'The Word of God on high is the fountain of Wisdom' [Ecclesiasticus 1:5].

"Will the Son therefore not have put His wisdom on His Mother's lips?

"If the mouth of a Prophet was purified with embers, because he had to repeat to men the words that the Word, the Wisdom, entrusted to Him [Is 6: 6-7], will Love not have cleansed and exalted the speech of His infant Spouse Who was to bear the Word, so that She should no longer speak as a little girl and then as a woman, but only and always as a celestial creature melted in the great light and wisdom of God?

"The miracle is not in the superior intelligence shown by Mary in Her childhood, as afterwards it was by Me. The miracle is in containing the Infinite Intelligence, that

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Love of God inspired Mary to give Herself to the Eternal One and to Him alone. Her resolve was constantly sustained by the flame of that love.

[Mary speaking to Anna of Phanuel, one of Her teachers at the Temple.] "If I {gaze into} My heart, I see God shining in His loving glory and He says to Me: 'I love You' and I reply to Him: 'I love You' and I die and I am recreated at each beat of My heart in this reciprocal kiss. . .

"I am amongst you, My dear teachers and companions. But a circle of fire isolates Me from you. Within the circle, God and Myself. And I see you through the Fire of God and so I love you. . . but I cannot love you according to the flesh, neither shall I ever be able to love anyone according to the flesh. I can only love Him Who loves Me, according to the spirit. This is My destiny. The secular Law of Israel wants every girl to be a wife, and every wife to be a mother [Gen. 1:28; Num. 36: 6-10; Tob. 8:4; 1 Tim. 5:14]. But, while obeying the Law, I must obey the Voice that whispers to Me: 'I want You'; I am a virgin and a virgin I shall remain. How shall I succeed? This sweet invisible Presence that is with Me will help Me, because it is Its desire. I am not afraid.

"I have no longer My father and mother. . . and only God knows how My love for whatever human being belonged to Me was burnt in that pain. It was a cruel sorrow.[159]

"Now I have but God. I therefore obey Him unquestioningly. . . I would have done so also regardless of My father and mother, because I have been taught by the Voice that whoever wishes to follow It, must go beyond father and mother. Parents are loving patrols watching the hearts of their children, whom they wish to lead to happiness according to their plans. . . and they are not aware of other plans leading to infinite happiness. . . I would have left them My dresses and mantles, to follow the Voice that says to Me: 'Come, My beloved Spouse.' I would have left them everything, and the pearls of My tears, for I would have cried having to disobey them, and the instincts of My blood, because I would have defied even death to follow the Voice calling Me, would have told them that there is something greater and sweeter than the love of a father and

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dwelt there, within suitable bounds, so that crowds should not be startled and satanic attention should not be awakened" (*Poema*, I, 49-50).

159. D2 replaces "cruel" with "deep."

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mother and that is the Voice of God. But now, by His will, I am free from this tie of filial love. Nay, it would not have been a tie. My parents were two just people and God certainly spoke to them as He speaks to Me. They would have followed justice and truth. When I think of them, I imagine them in the quiet expectation among the Patriarchs and I hasten with My sacrifice the coming of the Messiah to open for them the gates of Heaven. I am My own guide on earth, or rather God guides His poor servant giving Her His commands and I fulfil them because it is a joy for Me to obey. When the time comes, I will reveal My secret to the spouse. . . and he will accept it."

"But, Mary,. . . which words will You find to persuade him? You will have the love of a man, the Law and life against you."

"I shall have God with Me. . . God will enlighten the heart of the spouse. . . life will lose the incentives of the senses and become a pure flower with the fragrance of charity. The Law. . . Anna, don't call Me a blasphemer. I think the Law is about to be changed. By whom, do you think, if it is divine? By the Only One Who can change it. By God. The time is nearer then you think, I tell you. Because when I was reading Daniel [9:24], a great light came to Me from the depths of My heart and I understood the meaning of the enigmatic word. The seventy weeks will be shortened because of the prayers of just people. Does this mean that the number of the years is being changed? No. A prophecy is never wrong. But the measure of the prophetic time is the course of the moon, not of the sun. Therefore I say: 'Near is the hour when the Baby born of a Virgin will be heard crying.'

"Oh! Since this Light that loves Me tells Me so many things, I wish it would tell Me where the happy mother is, that will give birth to the Son of God and Messiah of His people![160] Barefooted I would travel all over the world, neither cold nor frost, neither dust nor heat, nor wild beast nor hunger would prevent Me from reaching Her and I would say to Her: 'Grant Your servant and the servant of the servants of Christ to live under Your roof. I will turn Your millstone and Your press, use Me as a slave to work Your millstone and to

160. D2 is annotated as follows: "We should not wonder that Mary did not know that She was the future Mother of Jesus. By a unique privilege, God had granted Her the wisdom that the Immaculate, predestined Mother of the Incarnate Word should have. However, for reasons which we cannot fathom, He decreed that Mary *ignore* certain things until the time was *ripe*."

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watch Your herds, make Me wash the napkins [diapers] of Your Child... I will work in Your kitchen, at Your oven, wherever You wish... but receive Me. That I may see Him! And hear His voice! And receive His glance!' And if She did not want Me, I would live at Her door-step like a beggar, in cold and hot weather, just to hear the voice of the Child Messiah and the echo of His laughter, and see Him passing by... And perhaps one day He would offer Me a piece of bread... Oh! If I were dying with hunger and I were fainting because of extensive fasting, *I would not eat that bread.* I would hold it close to My heart like a bag of precious pearls and I would kiss it to scent the perfume of Christ's hand and I would never be hungry or cold, because its touch would give Me ecstasy and heat, ecstasy and food..."

"You ought to be the Mother of the Christ, since You love Him so much! Is that why You wish to remain a virgin?"

"Oh! No. I am misery and dust. I dare not lift My eyes towards the Glory. That is why, rather than the double Veil, beyond which I know dwells the invisible Presence of {Yahweh}, I love looking into My heart. Over there, there is the terrible God of Sinai. Here, within Me, I see our Father, a loving Face that smiles and blesses Me, because I am small like a little bird, that the wind sustains without feeling its weight and I am weak like the stem of a lily of the valley, that can only bloom and smell sweetly and can present no other force to the wind but its scented and pure sweetness. God, My loving wind!

"[I do not even think of becoming the Mother of the Christ. I want to remain a virgin] because the Son of God and of a Virgin, the Holy of the Most Holy One, can but like what in Heaven He chose as His Mother and what on the earth speaks to Him of His Heavenly Father: Purity. If the Law pondered that, if the rabbis, who have complicated the Law with all the quibbles of their teaching, turned their minds to higher horizons and aimed at supernatural things, deserting the human and lucrative affairs which cause them to forget the supreme End, they should, above all make Purity the main subject of their teaching, so that the King of Israel may find It when He comes. With the olive branches of the Peaceful One, with the Palms of the Triumpher, spread lilies, lilies, lilies...

"How much Blood the Saviour will have to shed to redeem us! How much indeed! From the thousands of wounds that Isaiah saw on the Man of Sorrows [Is 53:5], a stream of Blood is falling, like

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dew from a porous vase. May this divine Blood not fall where there is desecration and blasphemy, but into chalices of fragrant purity that may receive it and gather it for the purpose of spreading it amongst the diseased and leprous souls and amongst those who are dead to God. Give lilies to wipe with their pure petals the sweat and the tears of Christ! Give lilies for His keen desire of Martyrdom! Oh! Where will that Lily be, that will bear You? Where is the Lily that will quench Your parching thirst, that will become red with Your Blood, will die [in Her heart] for the pain of seeing You dying, and will cry over Your bloodless Body? Oh! Christ! Christ! My desire!. . ."

Mary is now silent, weeping and overwhelmed.

Anna [of Phanuel] is also silent for a little while and then with her clear voice of a deeply moved old woman, she asks: "Have You anything else to teach me, Mary?"

Mary rouses. She must think, in Her humility, that Her teacher is reproaching Her and She exclaims: "Oh! Forgive Me! You are My teacher. I am nothing. But this voice comes from My heart. I watch over it, to avoid speaking. But like a river that under the fury of water breaks its embankment, it has now overcome Me and overflowed. Please pay no attention to My words and chastise My presumption. Words of Mystery should remain in the depths of one's heart, which God helps in His goodness. I know. But this Invisible Presence is so sweet that I am filled with joy. . . Anna, please forgive your little servant!"

Anna embraces Her while tears shine on her old wrinkled trembling face. The tears run along her wrinkles, like water along an uneven ground that becomes a trembling swamp. But the old teacher does not provoke laughter, on the contrary her crying excites the deepest respect.

Mary is clasped in her arms, Her little face against Her teacher's breast. And it all finishes thus (*Poema*, I, 65-68).

When precisely did Mary consecrate Herself to God with Her vow of chastity? We find the answer in *Il poema dell'Uomo-Dio*: from everlasting.

When Mary had been in the Temple for twelve years,[161]

161. Maria Valtorta describes the residence of the group of virgins who ministered at the Temple: "The crowd, nay the host of white dressed virgins, crosses the rear yard, then climbs the steps, goes through a porch and enters another square yard,

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one day, the High Priest summoned Her. At his side were Anne of Phanuel and Zechariah the Priest (who was Mary's cousin and John the Baptist's father). Addressing Mary, who was by now a young woman, the High Priest said:

"My child, I am aware of Your grace and goodness. I know that every day You {have grown} in grace and knowledge before God and men. I know that the voice of God whispers His sweetest words to Your heart. I know that You are *the Flower of God's Temple* and that a third Cherub {has been} before the Testimony [of the Ark of the Covenant] since {the day You arrived}. And I would like Your perfume to continue to rise with the incense every day. But the Law says differently. You are no longer a girl, but a woman. And every woman must be a wife in Israel to bear a son to the Lord. You shall follow the commandment of the Law. Do not be afraid, do not blush. I am aware of Your royalty. The Law that prescribes that each man is to be given a woman of his own stock will protect You [Num. 36: 6-10]. But even if that were not the case, I would do so, so that Your magnificent blood might not be corrupted. Don't You know anyone of Your stock, Mary, who might be Your husband?"

Mary lifts Her face full of blushes. Her eyes are shining with tears which begin to appear and with a trembling voice She replies: "No, nobody."

"It is not possible for Her to know anyone, because She came here in Her childhood and David's race has been struck too severely and scattered too widely to allow the various branches to gather like foliage around the royal palm" says {Zechariah}.

"We shall then leave the choice to God."

The tears that Mary had restrained so far, gush out and fall on Her trembling mouth. She looks imploringly at Her teacher.

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not quite so splendid, without any other door except the one leading into it. It must be the yard allocated to the small dwellings of the virgins assigned to the Temple, because each girl moves towards her cell, like a little dove to its nest. They look like a flock of doves that separate after gathering together" (*Poema*, I, 72). The first document that dealt with Mary's presentation in the Temple at the age of three is the *Proto-evangelium of James*. It was composed by a Christian about the middle of the second century (see G. Bonaccorsi. *Vangili apocrifi* [The Apocryphal Gospels], Florence, 1948, vol.I, p. 71-75). Many Church Fathers and writers also dealt with this topic between the 4th and 9th centuries. No one until the end of the 16th century either denied or doubted this episode in Mary's life (see G. Roschini, *Dizionario di Mariologia* [A Mariological Dictionary], Rome, 1961, p.402-404).

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"Mary has consecrated Herself to the Lord for His glory and for the salvation of Israel. She was but a little child just learning to read and write and *She had already made Her vow. . .*" says Anne, helping Her.

"Is that why You are crying then? Not because You wish to resist the Law?"

"Just for that. . . nothing else. I shall obey you, Priest of God."

"This confirms what I have always been told of You. How long have You been consecrated to the Lord?"

"*I have always been*, I think. I was not yet in this Temple, and I had already given Myself to the Lord."

"But are You not the little one who came twelve years ago and asked me to be allowed to enter?"

"I am."

"Well, then, how can You say that You already belonged to God then?"

"If I look back, I find I was consecrated. . . I do not remember when I was born, neither do I remember how I began to love My mother and to say to My father: 'Father, I am your daughter'. . . But I remember that I gave My heart to God, although I do not know when it started. Perhaps it was with the first kiss that I was able to give, with the first word that I learned to say, with the first step that I took. . . Yes, I think I find My first recollection of love with My first steady step. . . My house. . . near the house there was a garden full of flowers. . . and there was an orchard and some fields. . . and there was a spring of water at the rear, under the hill, and the water gushed out from a hollow rock that formed a grotto. . . it was full of long and thin herbs that hung down forming small green waterfalls everywhere and they seemed to be weeping because the thin little leaves, that seemed an embroidery work, had tiny little drops of water on them and when the drops fell they tinkled like little bells. Also the spring seemed to be singing. And there were birds on the olive and apple-trees above the spring and white doves used to come and wash in the clear water of the fountain. . . I was no longer thinking of all that, because I had put all My heart in God and, with the exception of My father and mother, whom I loved in life and in death, every other worldly thing had disappeared from My heart. . . But you have made Me think of it. . . I must find *when* I gave Myself to God. . . and the things of My first years come back to My mind. . .

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"I loved that grotto, because I heard a voice sweeter than the song of the water and the warbling of the birds say to Me: 'Come, My Beloved.' I loved those herbs covered with tinkling and sparkling diamond drops, because I could see in them the sign of My Lord and I used to say to Myself: 'O soul of Mine, see how great Your God is, He Who made the cedars of Lebanon for the eagles, has also made these little leaves that bend down under the weight of a little mosquito and He made them for the joy of Your eyes and as a protection for Your little feet.' I loved that silence of pure things: the light breeze, the silvery water, the purity of the doves. . . I loved the peace that hovered over the little grotto, and descended from the apple and olive-trees, now full of blossoms, then laden with beautiful fruit. . . And I do not know. . . the voice seemed to be saying to Me, yes, just to Me: 'Come, specious olive; come, sweet apple; come, sealed spring; come, My dove'. . . Sweet is the love of a father, sweet the love of a mother. . . sweet their voices calling Me. . . but this, this one! Oh! in the {Garden of Eden} I think that she, who became guilty, heard it thus, and I do not understand how she could prefer a [snake's] hiss to this voice of love, how she could desire any other knowledge that was not God. . . With My lips which still tasted of My mother's milk, but with My heart full of celestial honey, I then said: 'Here I am. I am coming. I am Yours. No one will have My body, but You, My Lord, neither will My soul have any other love. . .' And while saying so, it seemed to Me that I was saying over again things already said and that I was fulfilling a rite already fulfilled, and the chosen Spouse was not a stranger to Me, because I already knew His ardour and My sight had been formed at His light and My capacity for loving had been fulfilled in His embrace. . . When? I do not know. Beyond life,[162] I would say, because I feel I always had Him, and that He always had Me, and that I exist because He wanted Me for the joy of His spirit and Mine. . .

"Now I obey you, o Priest. But please tell Me how I am to behave. . . I have neither father nor mother. Please be My guide."

"God will give You Your husband and he will be a holy man, because You have entrusted Yourself to God. You will tell him Your vow."

"And will he agree?"

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162. "Beyond life" means "beyond life as we know it on earth." This refers to that dazzling instant when Mary's soul was created.

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"I hope so. Pray, my child, that he may understand Your heart. Go now. May God always accompany You."

Mary withdraws with Anna [of Phanuel]. {Zechariah} stays with the High Priest" (*Poema*, I, 73-76).

After the miracle of the branch that bloomed,[163] the High Priest introduced the Virgin Mary to Joseph, Her thirty year old pre-destined husband. The High Priest said:

"The spouse the Lord has presented you with, is not rich, as you know. But all virtues are in Her. Be more and more worthy of Her. There is no flower in Israel as beautiful and pure as She is" (*Poema*, I, 79).

When Zechariah and all the others went out to call the Bride, the High Priest, remaining alone with Joseph, went on to say:

"Mary wishes to inform you of a vow She made. Please help Her shyness. Be good to Her, Who is so good."

"I will put my strength and my manly authority at Her service, [Joseph replies,] and no sacrifice on Her behalf will be heavy for me. Be sure of that" (*Poema*, I, 79).

After doing the introductions, the High Priest retired along with Zechariah and Anne of Phanuel. The two fiancés now faced one another. Joseph offered Mary some almond tree blooms which he had picked in Her garden. He also disclosed to Her, for one thing, that he was a man consecrated to God (a Nazarite [see Num. 6]).

For this reason, Joseph did not expect to be chosen to become Her husband. He had presented himself at the special gathering arranged to find Mary a husband, not out of desire for marriage, but only to obey the High Priest. He also said to Mary that until then his heart had

163. The High Priest had summoned all the single men of the House of David, to find a husband worthy of Mary. Each man engraved his name on a dry branch. These were put aside and God was invoked; it was winter. One of the branches miraculously bloomed: it was Joseph's. [Editor.]

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bloomed up for none but the Lord (*Poema*, I, 81). At that, Mary's face

becomes bright and She takes courage: "Also I am all of the Lord, Joseph. I do not know whether the High Priest told you. . ."

"He only told me," [Joseph replies,] "that You are good and pure, that You wish to inform me of a vow, and that I must be good to You. Speak, Mary. Your Joseph wants You to be happy in all Your desires. I do not love You with my body. I love You with my soul, holy girl given to me by God! Please see in me a father and a brother, in addition to a husband. And open Your heart to me as to a father and rely on me as on a brother. . ."

"Since My childhood I have consecrated Myself to the Lord," [Mary says.] "I know this is not the custom in Israel. But I heard a voice requesting My virginity *as a sacrifice of love* for the coming of the Messiah. Israel has been waiting for Him for such a long time!. . . It is not too much to forgo the joy of being a mother for that!"

Joseph gazes at Her as if he wanted to read Her heart, then he takes Her tiny hands which are still holding the branch in blossom and he says: "I will join my sacrifice to Yours and we shall love the Eternal Father *so much* with our chastity that He will send His Saviour to the world earlier, and will allow us to see His Light shining in the world. Come, Mary. Let us go before His House and take an oath that we shall love each other as the angels do. Then I will go to Nazareth to prepare everything for You, in Your house, if You wish to go there, or elsewhere if You wish so" (*Poema*, I, 81).

On the wedding day, Anne of Phanuel asks Mary:

"What did he say about Your vow? You haven't told me yet."

"He made no objection. On the contrary, when I told him the reasons, he said: 'I will join my sacrifice to Yours.'"

"He is a holy young man" says Anna of Phanuel. (*Poema*, I, 85).

Nearly everything is ready for the wedding. While waiting, Joseph takes Mary aside and tells Her:

"I have pondered a lot on Your vow these last days. I told You that I will share it with You. But the more I think of it, the more I realise that a temporary Naziritism is not sufficient, even if renewed several times. *I have understood You, Mary.* I do not yet deserve the word of Light, but a murmur of it comes to me. And it causes

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me to read Your secret, at least in its main lines. I am a poor ignorant man, Mary. A poor workman. I know nothing of letters and I have no treasures. But I place at Your feet my treasure: my *absolute* chastity, for ever, to be worthy of being beside You, Virgin of God, "my sister spouse, enclosed garden, sealed fountain" [Canticle 4:12], as our Ancestor says, who perhaps wrote the {Canticle of Canticles} seeing You. . . I shall be the guardian of this garden of spices in which are the most precious fruits and from which a spring of living water gushes out in a gentle surge: Your kindness, o spouse, has conquered my soul with Your innocence, o most beautiful one. . . . Come, my beloved spouse" and he takes Her gently by the hand and leads Her towards the door (*Poema*, I, 86-87).

God placed Joseph as "the seal upon the Seal," as "an Archangel of fire on the threshold of Paradise," as "the magnificent reader of the sealed Book" (*Poema*, I, 91-92).[164]

The Annunciation provides us with a very clear echo of Mary's vow of chastity made at the dawn of Her life. When the Angel announced to Her that She would have an exceptional Son, Mary anxiously asked him:

"How can this come about, since I do not know man? Perhaps the Lord God will no longer accept the offer of His maidservant and does not want Me a Virgin for His love?" [At that the Angel reassured Her, explaining that Her motherhood would be Virginal] (*Poema*, I, 104).[165]

We must not think or say that the Blessed Virgin found such a vow of chastity easy. To make it, She had sacrificed to God the joy and honour of motherhood.

[The Blessed Virgin addresses us all in a dictation to the Seer.] "If you consider in what high esteem the Israelites held a mother,

164. Another passage, filled with the scent of lilies, evokes the circumstances of Our Lady's virginal marriage with St. Joseph. See Appendix A.

165. Even Loisy, a rationalist exegete, did not shrink back from writing: "Mary's affirmation ('I do not know man') has such an absolute character, that the common opinion of catholic exegetes who believe She intended to remain a Virgin all Her life, cannot be said to be arbitrary" (*Les Évangiles synoptiques* [The Synoptic Gospels], vol.I, p. 290).

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you will realise even more what sacrifice I had made when I consecrated Myself to virginity" (*Poema*, I, 112).

When, on account of Her vow of chastity, She renounced ever becoming the mother of a human being, Mary was actually preparing Herself, unawares, to become the Virginal Mother of God.

Ever since the dawn of Her life, Mary took great care to preserve the purity of Her heart, reserving it for God alone. That fact is brought to light in a most charming episode, which took place in the second year of Jesus' Public Ministry. The divine Master was in Gethsemane with His Apostles, when Matthew asked Him:

"Tell us more about Your Mother. Her childhood is so bright! The very reflection of that brilliance makes our souls pure, and I, a poor sinner, need that light so badly!"

"What shall I tell you?" [Jesus replies]. "There are so many episodes, one more touching than the other. . ."

"Did She tell you about them?"

"Yes, some. But Joseph told Me many more, as the most beautiful stories he could tell a child, and also Alpheus of Sarah, who was a few years older than My Mother, and was Her friend during the short period She was at Nazareth. . ."

"Oh! Please, tell us. . ." begs John.

They are all sitting in a circle in the shade of the olive trees . . . .

"I will tell you about *the lesson on chastity* that My Mother gave Her little friend and many more people a few days before entering the Temple.[166] A girl in Nazareth, a relative of Sarah's, got married on that day and also Joachim and Anne had been invited to the wedding. Little Mary went with them, and with other children She was to spread loose flower petals on the bride's way. They say that She was most beautiful, as a child, and everybody contended for Her after the joyful arrival of the bride. It was not easy to see Mary every day, as She lived mostly at home, where She loved a little grotto more than any other place, and even nowadays She calls it 'the grotto of Her nuptials.' So when She appeared outside, fair-

166. Mary, therefore, was not yet three.

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haired, rosy and kind, She was overwhelmed by caresses. They used to call Her 'the Flower of Nazareth' or 'the Pearl of Galilee' or also 'the Peace of God' in remembrance of a huge rainbow, which suddenly appeared as soon as She was born. She was in fact all that, and much more. She is the Flower of Heaven and of creation, the Pearl of Paradise and the Peace of God. . . Yes, the Peace of God. I am the Peaceful One because I am the Son of the Father and the Son of Mary: the Infinite Peace [the Father] and the Sweet Peace [Mary].

"On that day everybody wanted to kiss Her and take Her on their laps. And as She was averse to being kissed and touched, She said with kind gravity: 'Please, do not rumple Me.' They thought She was talking of Her linen dress, held tight to Her waist, to Her wrists and neck by a blue band, or of Her little wreath of blue flowers, with which Anne had adorned Her head to keep Her light curls in place, and they assured Her that they would not crease Her dress or the wreath. But, sure of Herself, a little three year old woman standing in the middle of a circle of adults, She said seriously: 'I am not thinking of what can be mended. I am speaking of My soul. It belongs to God. And it does not wish to be touched but by God.' They objected: 'But we are kissing You, not Your soul.' She replied: 'My body is the temple of My soul and the Spirit is its Priest. People are not allowed to enter the enclosure of priests. Please, do not enter the enclosure of God.'

"Alpheus, who was then about eight years old and was very fond of Her, was greatly impressed by that reply and the following day, seeing Her near Her little grotto, he asked Her: 'Mary, when You are grown up, would You marry me?' He was still under the excitement of the nuptial feast at which he had been present. And She answered: 'I am very fond of you. But I do not see you as a man. *I will tell you a secret.* I see only the soul of a living being. And I love it so much, with all My heart. But I see only God as the *'True Living Being'* to Whom I will be able to give Myself.'

"That is one of the episodes."

"*'The True Living Being'*!!! That is a very deep word!" exclaims Bartholomew.

And Jesus, humbly and smiling replies: "She was the Mother of Wisdom."

"Was She?. . . But was She not three years old?"

"She was. I already lived in Her, as God was in Her, in His most

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perfect Unity and Trinity, since She was conceived" (*Poema,* III, p.371-373)[167]

b) Mary's Physical Virginity

While *spiritual virginity* was the main focus of Mary's vow of chastity, *physical virginity* was also part of it. Mary remained a virgin throughout three classic phases: before, during, and after giving birth.

i) *Mary's Virginity before Jesus' Birth*

Jesus' conception was virginal.

[Jesus speaking.] "Love [the Holy Spirit] conceived [the Victim that had been prepared for centuries] only after preparing for Himself a bridal bed in a spotless womb" (*Poema,* IX, p.40).

Mary speaking. Jesus was

"born of the most sublime love that Heaven ever saw, of the love of a God with a virgin, of the kiss of Fire, of the embrace of Light which became Flesh, and made the womb of a woman the Tabernacle of God" (*Poema,* I, 153).

What is the reason for, as it were, such a blooming of lilies? Jesus dictated it for Valtorta to write down.

"To man and woman, corrupted by Satan, God decided to oppose the Man born of a Woman, Whom God had super-sublimed to such an extent that She generated without knowing man: a Flower that generates a Flower, without the need of seed, by a unique kiss of the Sun on the inviolated chalice of the Lily-Mary. . . .

"The sublime victory of God over Satan's revenge was to raise the perfection of the beloved creature to a super-perfection that should annul *at least in one person* all recollection of humanity, liable to Satan's poison, so that the Son should be generated not by a

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167. Note in the D2 copy. "Mary was never separated from Wisdom, because God's Wisdom, the Word, intended to take flesh in Her. The Word of God, therefore, always remained in Mary. She was the perpetual and most pure Sanctuary where the One and Triune God dwelled perpetually. She was the true Ark that bore the eternal Word. No other creature knew the Word of God as well as She did."

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man's chaste embrace, but by a divine embrace that causes the spirit to change colour in the ecstasy of the Fire.

"The Virgin's Virginity!. . .

"Come. Contemplate this deep virginity that gives ecstatic dizziness in its contemplation!" (*Poema*, I, 35-36).

Mary, therefore,

"knew the joy of being a Mother," [Jesus says,] "without the perturbation of being touched. She was the snow that became a flower and offered Herself to God. . . . . The seal of God closed Mary's lips. And Joseph became aware of the prodigy only when Mary came back from the house of Her relative {Zechariah} and appeared a mother to the eyes of Her spouse. . . . He suffered bitterly and he decided to desert Her, taking upon himself the reputation of an unfair man. But the Angel descended and said to him: 'Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what is forming in Her is the Son of God and She is a Mother by the deed of God. And when the Son is born, you will name Him Jesus, because He is the Saviour'" (*Poema*, II, 654-655).

ii) *Mary's Virginity during Jesus' Birth*

Jesus was born of "the Lily called Mary" (*Poema*, IX, p.90), in a phenomenal way, virginally, during an ecstasy:

"My Son's birth," [Mary says to the Seer,] "was an ecstasy for Me. After being enraptured in God at that time, I became aware of Myself and of the Earth, with My Child in My arms" (*Poema*, X, p.352).

The story of Christ's virginal birth is most interesting and fascinating. The spouses, failing to find room at the inn and facing the imminence of the joyful event, took refuge in a cave near Bethlehem. Mary is completely absorbed in prayer. Joseph also is praying fervently. . .

A thin ray of moonlight creeps in through a crack in the vault and it seems a blade of unearthly silver looking for Mary. It stretches in length as the moon climbs higher in the sky and at last reaches Her. It is now on Her head, where it forms a halo of pure light.

Mary lifts Her head, as if She had a celestial call, and She gets up and goes on to Her knees again. Oh! How beautiful it is here

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now! She raises Her head, and Her face shines in the white moonlight and becomes transfigured by a supernatural smile. What does She see? What does She hear? What does She feel? She is the only one who can tell what She saw, heard and felt in the refulgent hour of Her Maternity. I can only see that the light around Her is increasing more and more. It seems to come down from Heaven, to arise from the poor things around Her, above all it seems to originate from Herself.

Her deep blue dress now seems of a pale myosotis blue, and Her hands and face are becoming clear blue as if they were placed under the glare of a huge pale sapphire. This hue is spreading more and more on the things around Her, it covers them, purifies them and brightens everything. It reminds me, although it is somewhat softer, of the hue I see in the {visions} of holy Paradise, and also of the colour I saw in the visit of the Wise Men.

The light is given off more and more intensely from Mary's body, it absorbs the moonlight. She seems to be drawing to Herself all the light that can descend from Heaven. She is now the Depositary of the Light. She is to give this Light to the world. And this blissful, uncontainable, immeasurable, eternal, divine Light which is about to be given, is heralded by a dawn, a morning star, a chorus of atoms of Light that increase continuously like a tide, and rise more and more like incense, and descend like a large stream and stretch out like veils...

The vault, full of crevices, of cobwebs, of protruding rubble balanced by a miracle of physics, the dark, smoky repellant vault, now seems the ceiling of a royal hall. Each boulder is a block of silver, each crack an opal flash, each cobweb a most precious canopy interwoven with silver and diamonds. A huge green lizard, hibernating between two stones, seems an emerald jewel forgotten there by a queen: and a bunch of hibernating bats is like a precious onyx chandelier. The hay from the upper manger is no longer grass blades: it is pure silver wires quivering in the air with the grace of loose hair.

The dark wood of the lower manger is a block of burnished silver. The walls are covered with a brocade in which the white silk disappears under the pearly embroidery of the relief, and the soil... what is the soil now? It is a crystal lit up by a white light. Its protrusions are like roses {of light tossed to the ground in homage}; the holes, precious cups from which perfumes and scents {would} arise.

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And the light increases more and more. It is now unbearable to the eye. And the Virgin disappears in so much light, as if She had been absorbed by an incandescent curtain... and the Mother emerges.

Yes. When the light becomes endurable once again to my eyes, I see Mary with the new-born Son in Her arms. A little Baby, rosy and plump, bustling with His little hands as big as rose buds and kicking with His tiny feet that could be contained in the hollow of the heart of a rose: and is crying with a thin trembling voice, just like a new-born little lamb . . . . His {Mother} . . . adores Him weeping and smiling at the same time, and She bends down to kiss Him not on His innocent head, but on the centre of His chest, where underneath there is His little heart beating for us... where one day there will be the Wound. And His Mother is doctoring that wound in advance, with Her immaculate kiss (*Poema*, I, 187-188).[168]

The virginal birth was filled with joy and exempt of any pain. Mary said to the Seer:

"If My presence had sanctified the Baptist, it did not nullify for Elizabeth the sentence against Eve. 'You shall give birth to your children in pain' the Eternal Father had said [Gen 3:16]. Only I, because I was without stain, and I had not had any human copulation [since Christ was conceived virginally], was exempted from generating with pain. Sadness and pain are fruits of fault. I, Who was the Innocent One, had to know also sorrow and sadness, because I was the Co-Redeemer. But I did not know the torture of generating. No. I did not know that torture. But believe Me, daughter, that there never was, and never will be a torture of {childbirth} like Mine as the Martyr of a spiritual Maternity, which was accomplished on the hardest of beds, the bed of My cross, at the foot of the scaffold of My dying Son (*Poema*, I, 153).

Joseph, the just man, did not know that the Christ would be born virginally. His ignorance comes to light

168. *The Proto-evangelium of James*, written by a Christian in the mid-second century, says that at the moment of Jesus' birth, a "*bright cloud* overshadow[ed] the cave. . . . the cloud withdrew itself [from] the cave, *and a great light appeared in the cave* so that our eyes could not endure it. And by little and little that light withdrew itself until the young Child appeared..." (English translation: James, M. R., *The Apocryphal New Testament, Being the Apocryphal Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypses, With Other Narratives and Fragments*. Oxford, 1966. p.46; XIX.2).

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during the second year of Jesus' Public Ministry. One evening, when Jesus arrived at Mary's home, Mary said that this was the anniversary of Her departure with Joseph for Bethlehem at the time of the census. She further said that that day, in the house,

"were bags and cases open or full of clothes and particularly of swaddling-clothes... for a Little One, Who might be born, I used to say to Joseph; who *was to be* born, I said to Myself, in Bethlehem of Judah... I had hidden them in the bottom, because Joseph was afraid of that... He did not yet know that the birth of the Son of God would not be subject, both for Himself and for His Mother, to the common miseries of childbirth. He did not know... and he was afraid of being away from Nazareth with Me in that state. I was sure that I would be a Mother there..." (*Poema,* IV, p.1181-1182).

No wonder that the Blessed Virgin recalled, thirty-three years later,

"the sweet hour filled with light, singing, and praise for Jesus' birth..." (*Poema,* VI, p.969).

No wonder that Jesus said to Anna-Leah, a young virgin:

"He Who was born of a Virgin — because He could but build His nest on a pile of lilies — is nauseated, My dear daughter, by the triple lechery of the world . . ." (*Poema,* III, p.76).

iii) *Mary's Virginity after Jesus' Birth*

Many oppose this truth. What kind of people are they? Why do they do so? Jesus decided to explain to the Seer

". . . a detail quoted twice in the Gospel by Matthew, a sentence which is repeated twice: 'Get up, take the Child and *His Mother* with you, and escape into Egypt' [2:13]; 'Get up, take the Child and *His Mother* with you and go back to the land of Israel' [2:20]. And you saw that Mary was by Herself in Her room with the Child.

"Mary's virginity after Her delivery and Joseph's chastity have been strongly denied by those who being putrid mud themselves, are not prepared to admit that one like them can be as pure and clear as light. They are wretched people whose souls are so corrupted and their minds so prostituted to the flesh, that they are incapable of

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thinking that one like them can respect a woman seeing in her not her flesh but her soul, neither can they elevate themselves to live in a supernatural atmosphere, craving not for what is flesh, but only for what is God.

"Well, I wish to tell those deniers of the most beautiful things, those worms incapable of becoming butterflies, those reptiles covered with the slaver of their own lewdness, incapable of understanding the beauty of a lily, I wish to tell them that Mary *was and remained a virgin*, and that *only* Her soul was married to Joseph, exactly as Her spirit was united *only* to the Spirit of God by Whose deed She conceived Her Only Son: I, Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of the Father and of Mary.

"This is not a tradition embellished afterwards, out of loving respect for the Blessed Virgin Who was My Mother. It is the truth and has been known since early times.

"Matthew was not born {centuries later}. He was a contemporary of Mary. Matthew was not a poor ignorant man brought up in a forest and likely to believe any idle story. He was a clerk in the taxation office, as you would say nowadays, he was {a publican} as we said then. He could see, hear, understand, and tell the truth from the false. Matthew did not hear things reported by third parties. He heard them directly from Mary's lips to Whom he applied for information, prompted by his love for his Master and for the truth.

"I do not believe that those repudiators of Mary's inviolability will dare think that She may have lied. My own relatives could have given Her the lie, had there been other children: James, Judas [Thaddeus], Simon and Joseph were disciples together with Matthew. Therefore Matthew could have easily compared their versions, had there been more than one account. But Matthew does not say: 'Get up and take your wife.' He says: 'Take His Mother' [2:13]. Before he says: 'A virgin betrothed to Joseph' [1:18]; 'Joseph Her spouse' [1:16].

Neither those repudiators of Purity should tell Me that it was a way of speaking particular to the Jews, as if to say 'wife' was a disgrace. No, deniers of Purity. At the very beginning of the Bible we read: 'And he will join himself to *his wife*' [Gen 2:24]. She is called 'companion' up to the moment of the sensual consummation of the marriage, and afterwards she is called 'wife' in various circumstances and in different chapters. And these are the expressions referred to the wives of the sons of Adam. And so Sarah is called the 'wife' of

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Abraham: 'Sarah your *wife*' [Gen 17:15]. And: 'Take your *wife* and your two daughters' is said of Lot [Gen 19:15]. And in the book of Ruth it is written: 'The Moabitess, the *wife* of Mahalon' [Ruth 4:10]. And in the first book of the Kings it is said: 'Elkanah had two *wives*' [1 Sam 1:2 (Vulgate: I Kings 1:2)]. And further on: 'Elkanah then had intercourse with his *wife* Hannah' [1 Sam 1:19 (Vulgate: I Kings 1:19)]; and again 'Eli blessed Elkanah and his *wife*' [1 Sam 2:20 (Vulgate: I Kings 2:20)]. And again in the Book of the Kings it is said: 'Bathsheba, the *wife* of Uriah the Hittite, became the *wife* of David and bore him a son' [2 Sam 11:26-27 (Vulgate: 2 Kings 11:26-27)]. And what do you read in the blue book of Tobias, what the Church sings to you at your wedding, to advise you to be holy in your marriage? You read: 'Now when Tobias arrived with his *wife* and his son. . .' [Tob 1:11 (Vulgate)]; and again: 'Tobias succeeded in escaping with his son and with his *wife*' [Tob 1:23 (Vulgate)].

"And in the Gospels, that is in times contemporary with Christ, when therefore they wrote in a modern style of language, as compared to the ancient kind, and therefore no error of transcription could be suspected, it {is} said {precisely} by Matthew in Chapter 22: ". . . and the first, after marrying his *wife* died and left his *wife* to his brother" [verse 25]. And Mark at Chapter 10: "The man who divorces his *wife*. . .." [verse 11]. And Luke called Elizabeth the *wife* of {Zechariah} for four times running [1:5, 13, 18, 24] and in the eighth Chapter of his Gospel he says: "Johanna, the *wife* of Chuza [verse 3]."

"As you can see, this name was not a word banished by those who walked in the ways of the Lord, it was not an impure word not worthy of being uttered and least of all written when there was a mention of God and of His wonderful work. And the angel, saying: 'The Child and His Mother,' proves to you that Mary was His real Mother. But She was *not* a wife of Joseph. She remained for ever: "*The virgin betrothed to Joseph.*"

"And this is the last teaching of the vision. And it is a halo which shines on the heads of Mary and Joseph. The Inviolate Virgin. The just and chaste man. The two lilies amongst whom I grew up, receiving only the perfume of purity" (*Poema*, I, 247-249).

Elsewhere, Jesus comments on the false interpretation some give to the word 'Firstborn.'

". . . For {scholars} of captious objections I say that I made use

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of the words: *uncle* and *aunt*, which are unusual in Palestinian languages, to clarify and settle a disrespectful question concerning My condition of only-begotten Son of Mary and the Virginity of My Mother prae and post-partum; She in fact had Me through spiritual divine union, and let Me repeat it once again, *She knew no other union*, neither did She give birth to any other child: Inviolate Flesh, which even I did not rend, closed on the mystery of a tabernacle-womb, the throne of the Trinity and of the Incarnate Word" (*Poema*, II, 396).

The youthfulness of Mary's facial features, like those of an 'eternal child,' was a bright sign of Her virginal purity, as Maria Valtorta exclaims:

Is it possible that this Woman is the Mother of this Man? Where are the sixteen years of difference in age? The freshness and grace of Mary's face and of Her virginal body make Her a sister of Her Son Who is in the fullness of a handsome manliness (*Poema*, III, p.381).

Even towards the end of Her life, Mary's appearance seemed

"fresh and serene. . ." [John the Apostle speaking.] "Time has left no scars on Her sweet face. Age has been powerless on Her pure, blooming beauty" (*Poema*, X, p.312).

[John again.] "Time and sufferings have been powerless over Her. She still looks young, and She is still young in spirit" (*ibid.*, p.321).

3. The Assumption

At the end of Her life on earth, Mary was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.

In Her lifetime, Our Lady had three great ecstasies, of which the Assumption was the greatest.

"When I conceived My Son, that was an ecstasy. When I gave birth to Him, that was an even greater ecstasy. When I passed from Earth to Heaven, that was the ecstasy of ecstasies." (*Poema*, X, p.351)

The Assumption was also the third kiss which Love (the Holy Spirit) gave His incomparable Spouse.

[Mary speaking to the Seer]. "It is customarily said that I would

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have been delighted had My Son attended to Me at that time. My sweet Jesus, however, was with the Father when Love, that is the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the eternal Trinity, gave Me *the third of His kisses in My lifetime.*[169] This kiss was so divinely powerful that it took My soul away from Me. My soul evaporated in that contemplation, as a dewdrop in a lily's cup is drawn by the sun" (*ibid.*, p.353).

The privilege of the Assumption, like the Immaculate Conception and the Virginal Motherhood, was granted to no one but Mary.

Mary speaking.

"No other mortal flesh was like Mine, since it was glorified before the general Resurrection and the last judgment"[170] (*Poema*, X, p.354).

The glorification of Most Holy Mary was Her Assumption to Heaven body and soul. It was the last of Her singular privileges and crowned them all. Even before Pope Pius XII defined the Assumption as a faith dogma on November 1, 1950,[171] Maria Valtorta described it in great detail. Together, her several accounts give us a bright picture, historically and theologically complete, of the Assumption. They also enable us to know three things with greater precision:

a) Where did the Assumption occur?
b) When did the Assumption occur?
c) How did the Assumption take place?

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169. The first two kisses were given: 1) when Mary was immaculately conceived; 2) when Jesus was virginally conceived. [See p.268. Editor.]

170. Of course, Jesus' body also was glorified before the general Resurrection and the last judgment. Jesus had bodily died, however, whereas Mary did not. See further. [Editor.]

171. "We pronounce, declare and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of Her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory." (The Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*, A.A.S., 42 [1950], pp. 753-773; English Translation: Doheny, W.J., and Kelly, J.P., *Papal Documents on Mary.* Milwaukee, Bruce, 1954, p.239.)

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a) Where did the Assumption Occur?

The majority opinion is that Mary's Assumption, body and soul into heavenly glory, took place in Jerusalem. Some, however, argue that it was in Ephesus. Discussion is still going on.

The earliest tradition unanimously supports the Jerusalem opinion. Many relatively ancient testimonies indicate that Mary died in Jerusalem and was buried in Gethsemane (see Barnabé d'Alsace O.F.M., *Le tombeau de la Sainte Vierge à Jérusalem*, Jerusalem, 1903). This tradition is linked back to

1. Pseudo-Dionysius, a mystical writer;
2. the fourth century apocrypha of Pseudo-Melito of Sardis entitled *Transitus Beatae Mariae Virginis* [*The Passage (Assumption) of the Blessed Virgin Mary*] (see B. Bagatti, [*Archeological Discoveries at Mary's Tomb in Gethsemane*], in *Marianum*, 34 [1972], p.193-199);
3. Juvenal, who was the Patriarch of Jerusalem from 399 to 457 (P.G. 147, 748-752).

Afterwards, this tradition became universal.

The opinion that supports the city of Ephesus is much more recent, going back no further than the 17th century (Tillemont, *Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire ecclésiastique*, Paris, 1693, vol.1, p.73- 74). It was brought up again at the end of the last century, following the revelations of Ven. Anne-Catherine Emmerich (1774-1824). According to these, the Blessed Virgin would have spent the last years of Her life in Panagia-Kapuli (near Ephesus) with Saint John (see *Panaghia-Capouli ou la Maison de la Sainte-Vierge près d'Éphèse*, Paris-Poitiers, 1896).

Maria Valtorta's visions specifically locate Mary's Assumption in an isolated house in Gethsemane, just outside of Jerusalem. This little house was Lazarus' gift to the Blessed Virgin. It was completely fenced in to protect Her from Christ's enemies and shield Her from the curi-

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osity of relatives, friends, and other Christians (*Poema,* X, 277-280). As Lazarus said to Mary:

"I assure You that Jesus' enemies are scared of Rome. They won't dare disturb You in this peaceful place" (*ibid.*, p.280).

(This security helps to explain why John is the only one who witnessed Mary's Assumption.) The Blessed Virgin decided to give up Her residence in the Eucharistic House[172] and joyfully accepted Lazarus' offer.

"John and Me! By ourselves! Just the two of us! I will feel as though I were back in Nazareth with My Son! By ourselves, in peace! It will be very peaceful. That is a place where My Jesus spread many of His words and His spirit of peace. That is where He suffered, though, so much that He sweated blood. And that is where He went through the supreme mental suffering of [Judas'] base kiss and the first..." She sobs as an extremely painful memory chokes Her... Having regained control of Herself, She says: "That is where He returned to the infinite peace of Paradise!" (*ibid.*).

Mary informs John of Her decision and says:

"As long as God wants Me to live, I will help Peter and James and all of you. I will help the first Christians in any way I can. If the Jews, Pharisees and Priests are not as ferocious with Me as they were with My Son, I will be able to give up the ghost at the same place He went up to the Father" (*Poema,* X, p.282).

[The Visionary describes the house]. This is exactly what the little house is like. It has only one story, on top of which there is a terrace, as is usual for houses in the Near-East. It is a pure-white, unadorned cube; the walls are whitewashed and roughcast. The only openings are the doors, which must let the light into the little rooms. I say the rooms are little because there certainly cannot be large rooms in a cube about 20 feet square.

The little house stands in the midst of big olive trees with a lot of leaves. The trunks seem even darker in contrast with the white house walls. The house is in a small clearing; the trees are no more than six feet away from it. . . . I gather that the Beloved [John] has settled in a room of that house where the Dormition would [eventually] take place so that he would not be away from the Saviour's Mother. Also,

172. See note 96 on p.159. [Translator.]

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because he was convinced that Mary was incorruptible (*Quad. '44*, p.613 [Aug. 15]).

b) When Did the Assumption Occur?

This is a difficult question to answer precisely. Various hints allow the deduction that Mary's Assumption did not occur before A.D. 50 nor after A.D. 57.

Valtorta's writings tell us that the Assumption occurred in Jerusalem, that John was present, and that Peter had already left Jerusalem. When did Peter leave? It is historically certain that John and Peter lived and ministered in Jerusalem after Christ's Ascension and Pentecost (Acts 3:1ff). They preached together, were arrested together, (Acts 4:1ff), and evangelized Samaria together (Acts 8:14ff). Both were present at the Council of Jerusalem (A.D. 49). At this time, John, Peter, and James were called the three pillars of the Church (Gal. 2:9). This is the last time, however, that the Scriptures mention either Peter or John being in Jerusalem. At least, we can deduce that since Peter was still in Jerusalem in A.D. 49, the Assumption did not occur until after A.D. 49.

When did John leave? When St. Paul returned to Jerusalem in 57, he met James and the elders, but neither John or any other Apostle (Acts 21:18). Therefore, we are entitled to think that Saint John had already left Jerusalem by A.D. 57. Since John was present at the Assumption, the Assumption also must have occurred before A.D. 57.

We do not know the exact month but it must have been between April and September. This can be deduced from Valtorta's writings. When Mary passed away, Saint John picked "*olive boughs with the olives already formed*" (*Poema*, X, 339). Now olives "develop between spring and summer, and mature, that is, produce their

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oil, between fall and winter."[173] If olives were formed already, the Assumption must have taken place between April and September. We may even venture that it was in August, though without any definite certainty.[174]

Furthermore, according to Maria Valtorta, Mary fell into an ecstatic sleep late on a Friday afternoon as the Sabbath began (*Poema,* X, 334). Her Assumption body and soul to heavenly glory occurred when the fourth day dawned (*ibid.*, 344, 345).

c) How Did the Assumption Take Place?

Maria Valtorta's writings, both published and unpublished, provide an abundance of material on Mary's Assumption to heavenly glory:

[i) John the Apostle's Premonitions of the Assumption

ii) The "Flight" of Mary's Spirit to Heaven

iii) Mary's Assumption Body and Soul into Heavenly Glory

iv) On the Wings of an Overflowing Love

v) Did Mary Actually Die?

vi) Mary's Glory in Heaven

vii) A Scholarly Question: Was the Virgin Mary Aware of Her Privilege?

It should be noted at this point that Mary's Assumption in body and soul actually involved three distinct events.

The "flight of Her spirit" to Heaven (described in section ii);

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173. Translated from the *Enciclopedia Treccani,* vol.XXV, p.291, col.1.

174. In his *The Diary of Jesus. A Day by Day Account of Jesus' Life Based on Ancient Calendars and on the Writings of Maria Valtorta,* Mr. Jean Aulagnier dates Our Lady's Assumption in August of A.D. 51. (Sherbrooke, Quebec, Kolbe's Publications, 1990, second edition; p.313-314.) [Editor.]

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Her Assumption, strictly speaking, in body and soul (section iii);
Her glory in Heaven (section vi).]

i) John the Apostle's Premonitions of the Assumption

Since the newborn Church and its leaders had to face traps and persecutions at the hands of Pharisees, Scribes, Priests and members of the Sanhedrin, Saint Peter decided to send the Apostles to conquer the pagan world. When he told John about his decision, John made him realize that he, John, could not leave Mary nor compel Her to leave Palestine. Peter agreed and decided that John should remain with Mary.

". . . I'll join you all later," [John says,] "when Mary isn't on earth anymore."

"You'll come. You're young. . . You've got a long life ahead of you yet," [Peter says].

"But Mary doesn't."

"Why? Is She sick? Is She suffering? Has She been weakened, perhaps?"

"No! Time and sufferings have been powerless over Her. She still looks young, and She is still young in spirit. She's serene, I'd even say, happy."

"Why then do you say. . ."

"Because I understand what the flowering of Her beauty and happiness means. It means She knows She'll soon be reunited with Her Son. I mean *totally reunited* with Him,[175] because Her spiritual union has never stopped. I don't lift the veil from God's mysteries, but I'm sure that She sees Her Son everyday, in all His glory. That's Her beatitude. I believe that when She contemplates Him, Her spirit is enlightened and gets to know the future in the same way God does. Even Her own future. Bodily She's still on earth, but I'd say — I'm

175. "By Her assumption to Heaven with the totality of Her virginal substance, in soul and body." (Fr. Berti's note in the Italian critical edition, vol. X, p.321, note 16.)

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almost positive — that Her spirit is nearly always in Heaven.[176] Her union with God is so great that I don't think I'm being sacrilegious if I say God is in Her just as when She bore Him in Her womb. And even more so now. The Word united with Her to become Jesus Christ. In the same way now, She's uniting with Christ so much that She's becoming a second Christ and has taken on a new humanity, Jesus' own.[177] If that's heresy, I hope God will make me realize my error and forgive me. She lives in love. That fiery love sets Her on fire, nourishes Her and enlightens Her. The same fiery love will take Her away from us when the time is ripe. She won't suffer and Her body won't corrupt... We'll be the only ones grieving... Especially me... We won't have our Lady anymore, our Guide, our Comforter... And I'll be really lonely..."

Until now John's voice was quavering as he held back his tears. He now breaks into heart-rending sobs. He never cried like this, not even at the foot of the cross or in the Tomb. Peter also begins to weep, though more peacefully. While in tears, he begs John to send word, if he can, so he could attend Mary's death or, at least, Her burial.

"I will if I can, but I really doubt it. Something tells me deep inside the same thing will happen to Her as it did to Elijah: he was taken up on a fiery chariot in a heavenly whirlwind.[178] By the time I barely realize She's about to die, She'll be in Heaven with Her soul already."

"But at least, Her body will be left behind. That's what happened to the Master's body, and He was God!"

"It *had* to be that way with Him, but it doesn't have to with Her. He had to rise from the dead to deny the slander of the Jews. He had to appear in order to persuade those who doubted and those who rejected Him because He had died on a cross. But Mary doesn't need to do that. But if I can tell you, I will. So long, Peter, my Pontiff and brother in Christ. I'm going back to Her. She must be waiting for me. God be with you."

"And with you too. Ask Mary to pray for me and to forgive me, again, for being cowardly on the night of the trial. I can't blot out

176. See Phil. 3:17-21; Heb. 11:13-16.
177. See Rom. 6:11; Gal. 2:19-20; Phil. 1:21; Col. 3:1-4.
178. See 2 Kings 2:1-18 (*Vulgate: 4 Kings 2:1-18*); Sirach 48:1-11 (*Vulgate: Ecclesiasticus* 48:1-11).

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that memory from my heart and I don't have peace of mind about it..." Tears begin rolling down Peter's cheeks. He goes on to say: "Let Her be a Mother for me, a loving Mother for Her unhappy prodigal son..."

"That's not right, Peter. I don't have to tell Her. She loves you more than a blood-mother would. She loves you as Mother of God with the charity of God's Mother. If She was willing to forgive Judas when his sin was beyond measure, do you think She hasn't forgiven you? Peace to you, brother. I'm going."

"I'm coming along, if you don't mind. I want to see Her once more."

"Come. I know how to get to Gethsemane without being seen."

They set off, walking quickly and quietly towards Jerusalem. They take the high street that reaches the side of the olive grove that is farthest from the city.

They arrive at the crack of dawn. Having entered Gethsemane, they come down to the little house. Mary, who is on the roof-deck, sees them arriving. Crying out for joy, She comes down to meet them.

Peter immediately falls at Her feet with his face against the ground. "Mother, forgive me!" he says.

"What for? Have you sinned? The One who reveals all truth to Me has revealed to Me that you are His worthy successor in the faith. He said nothing else. I have found you to be a just man, although you are quite impulsive at times. What do I have to forgive you for?"

Peter weeps and remains silent.

John explains. "Peter can't get over the fact he denied Jesus in the Temple's court."

"That's past, Peter. It's blotted out. Did Jesus, perhaps, rebuke you for it?"

"No."

"Did He love you less than before?"

"No. Really, no. It was the other way around!..."

"And didn't He tell you that He and I understood you and forgave you?"

"That's true. I'm just as stupid as ever."

"Well, go, then, and be at peace. I tell you: all of us — you, Me, the other Apostles and deacons — we'll all meet in Heaven, at the side of the God-Man. As far as it has been granted to Me, I bless

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you." As She did for Gamaliel, Mary lays Her hands on Peter's head and traces on it the sign of the cross.

Peter bows down to kiss Her feet and stands up. He is much more serene than he was at first. Still accompanied by John, he walks to the gate, walks out and leaves. John closes the entrance carefully and returns to Mary (*Poema,* X, p.321-324).

Mary is in Her little, solitary room, up on the roof-terrace . . . . She is putting away Her clothes, as well as Jesus' clothes which She always kept. She chooses the best ones. There are not many of them. She takes the tunic and the coat that She was wearing on Calvary. She chooses a linen tunic that Her Son used to wear on summer days, as well as the coat that was found in Gethsemane. It is still stained with the blood that oozed out with His perspiration at that horrible time.

Mary folds the clothes carefully and kisses Jesus' bloodstained coat. She then walks over to a chest, in which the relics of both the Last Supper and Passion were kept. (These had been gathered many years earlier.) Mary puts all the relics on a single shelf, the top shelf, and puts the clothes on the bottom one.

John has quietly climbed to the roof-terrace. He must have been wondering why Mary had been away from Her kitchen for so long. (I imagine that's where She was before She came to the roof-deck to spend the morning.) He sees Her closing the chest. He seems to be fascinated. He asks Her: "What are You doing, Mother?"

Startled, Mary answers: "I just stowed away all the things that should be kept. All the memories... All that witnesses to His infinite love and suffering."

"Why are You looking at those sad things, Mother? It's re-opening the wounds of Your heart. You're pale and Your hand's trembling... You're suffering because You looked at them." John has drawn near to Her as he spoke. Her face is so ashen and She trembles so much that John is rather afraid She might feel unwell and fall.

"Oh! that's not why I am pale and tremble. It's not because My wounds are opened up again... Really, they were never completely healed. Anyhow, I am peaceful and joyful, and My peace and joy have never been so complete as now!"

"Never so complete as now? I don't understand... If *I* see those things loaded with horrible memories, I relive the anguish I felt back then. I'm only one of His disciples, and You're His Mother..."

"And as such, I should suffer even more, you mean. Humanly

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speaking, you are right. But that's not the way it is. I am used to the grief of not being with Him . . . . Right now, though, I am filled with joy, a *deep* joy. It is just as deep as My grief was. I have a feeling that My life is coming to an end. I have done everything I was supposed to do. My mission on earth has been accomplished. My other mission, in Heaven, will have no end. God has left Me on earth until I did all I had to do, just as He did with Jesus. I feel this secret joy, the only drop of balm that Jesus felt in the last, bitterest part of His heartbreak, when He could say: 'All is accomplished.'"

"*Jesus? Happy at that time?*"

"Yes, John. People can't understand that joy. But spirits already living in God's light can. Through that light, they can see the deeper things, hidden behind the veils God covers His Kingly secrets with. . . . I, too, have accomplished everything that Scriptures, from all eternity, foretold I was to accomplish. Everything, from giving birth to the Redeemer to helping all of you, His Priests, so that you would be perfectly formed. Now the Church is already formed. It is strong. The Holy Spirit enlightens it, and the blood of the first martyrs strengthens it and makes it grow. My help has helped to turn it into a holy organism. Charity towards God and the brothers nourishes and strengthens it ever more . . ."

. . . When Mary began speaking about Her mission being accomplished, John turned pale. He now grows even paler and feels troubled. He interrupts Her, exclaiming: "Mother! Why do You talk like this? Are You feeling sick?"

"No."

"Do You want to leave me, then?"

"No. I will stay with you as long as I am on earth. But get ready, John, My dear, to be by yourself."

"So You are sick and You don't want me to know!. . ."

"No, believe Me. I have never felt so strong, so peaceful, so happy as I do now. I am filled with such joy, such a fullness of supernatural life. . . that I think I won't be able to contain it and stay alive. Besides, I am not eternal. You have to understand that. My spirit is eternal, but not My body. It will die, like any other body."

"No! Don't say that. You can't die! You *mustn't* die! Your immaculate body can't die like the bodies of sinners!"

"You are wrong, John. My *Son* died! I will die too. I won't go through disease, agony or death spasms, but I will die. Besides, My son, I want you to know: if there is anything I want, if I have any

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desire all Mine and only Mine, a desire I have had ever since He left Me, *this is it*. This is My chief desire, a powerful desire, all Mine. Better still, I can say: that's what I want above all. Everything else in My life was but conforming of My will to God's will. . . . But this, My desire to reunite with Jesus, is My very own will. Leave earth and go to Heaven so I can be with Him for ever and uninterruptedly! My longing for so many years! And now, I know it is just about to become reality. Don't be so upset, John! Listen to My last wishes instead. When My body is deprived of its vital spirit, when it rests in peace, don't subject Me to the embalming in use among the Hebrews. I am not a Hebrew anymore. I am a Christian. When you think it over, *I am the first Christian:* I was the first to have Christ, Flesh and Blood, inside of Me; I was His first disciple; I was Co-Redemptrix with Him; and I have been His continuation among you, His servants. No one on earth, except My father and mother and those who were present at My birth, ever saw My body. You often call Me 'the true Ark that contained the Word of God.' And you know, John, that the Ark can be seen by none but the High Priest.[179] You are a Priest, and you are far holier and purer than the Pontiff of the Temple, but I want no one but the Eternal Pontiff to see My body at the appointed time. Because of that, do not touch Me. Besides, see? I have already purified Myself and I have put on a clean garment, the garment of My eternal wedding... John, why are you weeping?"

"Because a storm of grief is breaking inside of me. I know I'll lose You! How will I manage to live without You? Just thinking about it, my heart is breaking inside of me! I won't get over it!"

"You will. God will help you to live a long life, just as He helped Me. Because if He hadn't helped Me on Golgotha when Jesus died, or on the Mount of Olives when He ascended [into Heaven], I would already be dead. . . . God will help you to live and remember everything I told you before, for the good of all."

"Oh! I'll remember. I'll remember everything. I'll do what You want, even about Your body. I know the Hebrew rituals are useless for You since You're a Christian, since You are the Most Pure Woman. I am sure You won't go through the corruption of the flesh.

179. See Ex. 25:10-22; 37:1-9; Lev. 16; 1 Sam. 4-6 (*Vulgate: I Kings 4-6*); 2 Sam. 6 (*Vulgate: II Kings 6*); 1 Kings 8:1-13 (*Vulgate: III Kings 8:1-13*); 1 Chron. 13 (*Vulgate: I Par. 13*); 2 Chron. 5:2, 6:2 (*Vulgate: II Par. 5:2, 6:2*); Heb. 9.

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Your body was divinized[180] as no other mortal body, because You were exempt from original sin, You contained the fullness of grace, and above all You contained Grace itself, the Word. You are the most authentic relic of the Word, so Your body can't go through decay and rotting of dead flesh. That will be God's ultimate miracle for You, and in You. You'll be preserved as You are. . ."[181]

"Well, don't cry then!" Mary exclaims. She looks at the upset Apostle, whose face is wet with tears. "If I am preserved the way I am, you won't lose Me. Don't be so upset!"

"I'll lose You, even if Your body is incorruptible. I know it. I feel caught in a hurricane of grief. It's a hurricane breaking me and beating me down. You were everything to me, especially since my parents died, and because my other blood brothers and my brothers in the ministry are far away. Even my dear Marziam is away: Peter took him along. Now I'm going to be all by myself in the worst of storms!" John falls at Her feet, crying even louder.

Mary, bending over him, lays Her hand on his head shaking with sobs. She says: "No, don't do this. Why do you grieve Me? You were very strong at the foot of the cross and it was a horrible scene. Never was there such great martyrdom. Never was there such satanic hatred among the people. You were so strong! You comforted Him and Me. And today, on a quiet, peaceful Sabbath evening, when I'm

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180. "Divinized." See note 76 on p.107. [Editor.]

181. Christian liturgical, Patristic, and theological Tradition, as highlighted in the dogmatic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*, has insisted a great deal on Mary's *incorruptibility*. This means that Her body would not decay. This privilege was manifested in the mystery of Christ's *virginal birth* and the mystery of Her Assumption.

Once we admit this incorruptibility, we must remember that *death* essentially is a form of *corruption*. At death, the human body loses its organizing principle, the soul. The body is now a corpse, subject to the principle of decay which destroys the *unity* of the body. Therefore, to say *incorruptibility* and *death* in the same breath is absurd: it is a real *contradiction in terms*.

Christ's case is very different from Mary's because His human and Divine natures are united in one Person. Christ's body (after it was separated from His soul) continued to exist (as did His soul) in the divine Person of the Word. For this reason, Christ's body remained "identically the same in Christ according to the [Person] of the Word of God" (see St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III q.50, a.5, ad 2 [English translation: op. cit., Vol. II, p. 2297]). In other words, it remained united to the Word and thus preserved its unity, without returning to natural cycles and a multiplicity of substances. However, what can be applied to Christ here cannot, of course, be applied to Mary. For this and other reasons, a large number of theologians deny or doubt that Mary really died. When, therefore, His Holiness Pope Pius XII defined the Assumption of Mary in soul and body as a faith dogma, he deliberately left aside the question as to whether the Blessed Virgin died or not.

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rejoicing because I have a feeling that happiness is just about to seize Me, you're that upset? Calm down. Imitate, or rather unite yourself to what is around us and in Me. Everything is peace. You too, be at peace. Everything is quiet except for the olive trees, but their rustling is so light that it sounds like Angels hovering about the house. Perhaps some Angels are really here! After all, there has always been at least one Angel close to Me at key times in My life. . . . I can't see any Angels tonight, but I feel them around Me. And I can feel in Me, inside of Me, a growing Light. It is an unbearable light, like the light that surrounded Me when I conceived the Christ, when I gave Him to the world. It is coming from a throb of love stronger than my usual. With a similar surge of love, I was able to obtain the Word from Heaven before the appointed time, so that He would become the Man and Redeemer. With a similar surge of love, like the one uplifting Me tonight, Heaven will hopefully ravish Me and take Me, in My spirit, to the place I pine for! There, I could sing for ever with the multitude of saints and the choirs of Angels! I could sing My imperishable *Magnificat* [Lk 1:46-55] to God for the great things He has done for Me, His handmaid."

"You probably won't be taken up to Heaven just in Your spirit," [John says to Mary.] "In response to Your song, the Earth, with all its peoples and nations, will glorify You, honour You, and love You as long as the world lasts. Thus Tobiah's rather obscure prediction about You [Tobit 13:13-18] will come true, because the One who really carried the Lord inside of Her is *You*, not the Holy of Holies. Singlehandedly, You have loved God more than all the High Priests and all the others in the Temple put together over the centuries. Your love is ardent and most pure. Because of that, God will make You most happy."

[Mary replies:] "And He will bring to pass My only desire, My only will. This is because love can obtain everything when it is total. When love is almost as perfect as My Son's love — and He is God — it can obtain even what people think is impossible to get. Remember that, John, and tell your brothers. You will meet with a lot of opposition. All kinds of obstacles will make you afraid you might be defeated. Persecutors will scheme against you. Christians will desert because of. . . Judas Iscariot's way of thinking. All that will depress your spirits, but don't be afraid. Be filled with love and have no fear. The more you love, the more God will help you. He will make you overcome everything and everyone. We can obtain

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everything if we become seraphim. That is when our soul soars towards Heaven. Our soul is an admirable eternal thing; it is God's own breath that He Himself breathed inside of us [Gen 2:7]. When we become like Seraphim, our soul becomes a flame and falls at the feet of the divine throne. It speaks and God listens to it. It obtains what it wants from the Almighty. If mankind could love as the ancient Law decreed, [Deut 5:32 to 6:13; Lev 19:15-18], if mankind could love as My Son loved and taught to love, it would obtain everything. That is the way I love. That is why I feel it is an overflow of love that will take Me away from earth, just as an overflow of grief killed Jesus. This is it! The measure of My capacity for love is full to the brim. My soul and My flesh can't contain it anymore. Love is overflowing, washing all over Me and, at the same time, lifting Me up towards Heaven, towards God, towards My Son. His voice is telling Me: 'Come! Get out! Soar towards Our throne and Our triune embrace!' The earth around Me is disappearing in the great light coming to Me from Heaven! Every sound is drowned in this heavenly voice! Dear John, the hour of God's embrace has come for Me!"

Although John had calmed down somewhat, he was still troubled as he listened to Mary. Towards the end of Her speech, as he was looking at Her, he, too, seemed almost in ecstasy. His face, like Mary's, is ashen although Her paleness has slowly ignited into a dazzling white light. John, hurrying at Her side to support Her, exclaims. "You're like Jesus when He was transfigured on Mount Tabor! Your flesh is shining like the moon. Your clothing is sparkling like jewels and diamonds held in front of a pure white flame! You're no longer like other humans, Mother! The heaviness and opacity of Your flesh are gone! You're like light! But You are not Jesus. He was God, not just a man. He could order Himself to rise, both on Mount Tabor and here on the Mount of Olives [during His Ascension]. But You can't. You don't have that power. Come, let Me help You to stretch Your tired, happy body on Your bed. Take some rest!" John most lovingly brings Her to the poor bed. Mary does not even take Her coat off; She simply lays down (*Poema*, X, p.325-337).

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ii) *The "Flight" of Mary's Spirit to Heaven*

[Jesus speaking to the Seer.] "As a tired lily, having exhaled all its perfumes, bows down under the stars and closes its white chalice, so did Mary, My Mother, when Her last hour had come. She composed Herself on Her bed and closed Her eyes to everything around Her, so as to concentrate on Her ultimate, serene contemplation of God.

"Bending over Her as She rested, Mary's [heavenly] Angel was anxiously waiting for a powerful ecstasy to separate Her spirit from Her flesh. At the time decreed by God, Her spirit would be forever taken away from earth. Meanwhile, God's sweet, pressing invitation was already descending from Heaven.

"Also bending over Her mysterious rest, Her earthly angel, John, was keeping watch over the Mother who was to leave him. When he saw that She had passed away, he kept watching over Her, so that no profane, curious glances should disturb, after Her death, the Immaculate Spouse and Mother of God, asleep, so peaceful, so beautiful" (*Poema,* X, p.350).

Let us move on to the specific aspect of this ecstasy of love, the ecstasy of ecstasies: the one which crowned the earthly life of the noble Mother of God.

Folding Her arms on Her chest, Mary lowers Her eyelids on Her soft eyes that sparkle with love. To John, who is bending over Her, She says: "I am in God, and God is in Me. While I contemplate Him and feel His embrace, chant the Psalms and the other portions of Scriptures that speak about Me, especially about this moment of My life. The Spirit of Wisdom will tell you which ones. After that, recite My Son's prayer. Repeat to Me the words of the Archangel at the Annunciation, and Elizabeth's words, and My hymn of praise... I will pay attention with whatever remains of Me on this earth..."

John resists the tears welling up from his heart and tries to master the emotions that trouble him. He intones Psalm 118[182] with his

182. [In this passage, Maria Valtorta refers to the Psalms according to the numbering of the Vulgate. Editor.] Psalm 118 (Hebrew numbering: 119) begins thus:

"Blessed are the undefiled in the way,
who walk in the law of the Lord.
Blessed are they that search His testimonies:
that seek Him with their whole heart." [Douay.]

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very beautiful voice. As years went by, it has become very much like Christ's. Mary notices that and says, smiling: "It sounds as if My Jesus was at My side!" After chanting most of Psalm 118, John intones the first three verses of Psalm 41,[183] the first eight verses of Psalm 38;[184] Psalm 22[185] and the first Psalm.[186] He then goes on to the

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This Psalm is called an alphabetical psalm because all the couplets in its *first* stanza begin with Aleph, the *first* letter of the Hebrew alphabet, all the couplets in the *second* stanza with Beth, the *second* Hebrew letter, and so forth for all the letters of the Hebrew alphabet (22 in all). This long psalm is a kind of moral and religious code. Throughout, it praises the Law of God under various synonyms: judgments, testimonies, justifications, precepts, etc. The Law indeed expresses God's delightful will for humanity, His will making us happy if we remain faithful to it.

183. Psalm 41 (*Vulgate;* Hebrew numbering: 42) begins as follows:
"As the hart pants after the fountains of water;
so my soul pants after You, O God.
My soul has thirsted after the strong living God." [Douay.]

[Maria Valtorta might have meant "the first three verses" (Italian: versetti) in the modern sense of verses (the numbered verses found in our Bibles). Father Roschini, however, understood the word in the sense of spoken verses (the groups of words that are chanted without a pause, as in liturgical recitation). That is why he quoted only three lines (Psalm 41:1-2a) instead of three full verses (Psalm 41:1-3). The same remark applies to the quotation in the following footnote. Editor.]

184. Psalm 38 (*Vulgate;* Hebrew numbering: 39) begins like this:
"I said: 'I will take heed to my ways:
that I sin not with my tongue.'
I have set a guard to my mouth,
when the sinner stood against me.
I was dumb, and was humbled, and kept silence from good things:
and my sorrow was renewed.
My heart grew hot within me:
and in my meditation a fire shall flame out." [Douay.]

These eight lines actually expressed Saint John's feelings towards Mary's Assumption.

185. The text of Psalm 22 (*Vulgate;* Hebrew numbering: 23) is as follows:
"The Lord rules me:
and I shall want nothing.
He has set me in a place of pasture.
He has brought me up, on the water of refreshment:
He has converted my soul.
He has led me on the paths of justice,
for His own name's sake.
For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evils,
for You are with me.
Your rod and Your staff, they have comforted me.
You have prepared a table before me,
against them that afflict me.
You have anointed my head with oil;
and my chalice which inebriates me, how goodly is it!

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Our Father, Gabriel's words, Elizabeth's words, Tobiah's canticle,[187] and chapter 24 of Ecclesiasticus, verses 11-46.[188] Finally, he intones the *Magnificat*. But when he gets to the ninth verse ["He has received Israel His servant . . ." (Douay)], he notices that Mary is no longer

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And Your mercy will follow me
all the days of my life.
And that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
unto length of days." [Douay.]

186. Psalm 1:
"Blessed is the man who has not walked in the counsel of the ungodly,
nor stood in the way of sinners,
nor sat in the chair of pestilence.
But his will is in the law of the Lord,
and on His law he shall meditate day and night.
And he shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters,
which shall bring forth its fruit in due season.
And his leaf shall not fall off:
and all whatsoever he shall do shall prosper.
Not so the wicked, not so:
but like the dust, which the wind drives from the face of the earth.
Therefore the wicked shall not rise again in judgment:
nor sinners in the council of the just.
For the Lord knows the way of the just:
and the way of the wicked shall perish." [Douay.]

187. [While Fr. Roschini quotes a non-Vulgate translation of Tobiah's canticle on p. 369-370, Valtorta's own quotations are very close to the text of the *Vulgate* (see p. 302-303 and 193). Here I will quote from the Douay, a translation of the *Vulgate*. Editor.]
"You shall shine with a glorious light:
and all the ends of the earth shall [honour] You.
Nations from afar shall come to You:
and shall bring gifts,
and shall adore the Lord in You,
and shall esteem Your land as holy.
For they shall call upon the Great Name in You.
They shall be cursed that shall despise You:
and they shall be condemned that shall blaspheme You:
and blessed shall they be that shall build You up.
But You shall rejoice in Your children,
because they shall all be blessed,
and shall be gathered together to the Lord.
Blessed are all they that love You,
and that rejoice in Your peace." [Tobit 13:13-18; Douay.]

188. The splendid praise which Wisdom makes of Itself in Ecclesiasticus 24: 11-46 is applied to Mary in the Sacred Liturgy. [The second Italian edition and the first English edition of this book gave a different reference (verses 11-16 instead of 11-46). Also, those verses (11-16) were quoted from a non-identified Italian translation of the Bible that does not number the verses in the same way as the Vulgate does. I have come to the conclusion that since Maria Valtorta herself gave references according to the Vulgate, and since the official Latin Rite Catholic translation of the Bible is the Latin Vulgate, a quotation of Ecclesiasticus 24: 11-46 from the Vulgate is in order. Appendix E contains such a quotation, in its Douay-Challoner English version. Editor.]

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breathing, although Her posture and appearance remain natural. She is smiling serenely, as if She had not realized that Her life had come to an end.

John, with a heart-rending cry, throws himself on the floor against the edge of the bed and calls Mary. Again he calls Her. He cannot persuade himself that She can no longer reply to him, Her body being deprived of Her vital soul.

John has to yield to the evidence. He bends over Her face, on which an expression of supernatural joy remains. Tears after tears drop from his eyes onto Mary's sweet face and pure hands so delicately folded on Her chest. This is the only bath which Mary's body received: the tears of the Apostle of love, whom She adopted as a son at Jesus' request.

When he recovers from his initial outburst of grief, John remembers Mary's last wishes. Since the flaps of Her ample linen coat are hanging along the bed's edge, John lifts them and spreads them on Her body. He lifts the veil, which was hanging from the pillow, and spreads it over Her head.

Mary now looks like a statue of white marble, lying on the lid of a sarcophagus. John gazes at Her for a long time, which draws yet more tears from his eyes.

He then rearranges the room, removing any superfluous objects. He leaves only the bed and, against the wall, a little table. On it he puts the chest that contains the relics. He also leaves a stool between the bed on which Mary is lying and the door that leads out onto the roof-terrace. Finally, John leaves a night table on which stands a lantern. He lights it, because evening is coming.

John quickly goes down to the garden of Gethsemane to pick as many flowers as he can find as well as olive boughs with the olives already formed. He returns to the little room. The light shed by the lantern enables him to arrange the boughs and flowers around Mary's body. Mary seems to be in the middle of a huge crown.

While doing this, John talks to Her as if She could hear him. "You always were a lily of the valleys,[189] a delicate rose, a fair olive tree, a fruitful vine, a holy ear of grain. You have given us your perfumes,[190] and the Oil of Life, and the Wine of the strong, and the Bread[191] that saves from death the spirit of those who eat It worthily.

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189. This is an allusion to the Canticle of Canticles 2:1.
190. This is an allusion to Sirach 24:14-17 (*Vulgate: Ecclesiasticus 24:18-23*).
191. Psalm 104:13-15 (*Vulgate: 103:13-15*).

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They go well around You, these flowers: they're simple and pure like You, decorated with thorns, like You, and peaceful like You. Now let's move this lamp closer, like this, by Your bed, so it can watch over You and keep me company while I'm keeping watch. I'll be waiting for at least one of the miracles that I am expecting and praying for.

"First, that according to his wish, Peter, and the others, could see You once more. I'll send Nicodemus' servant to tell them.

"Secondly, since in all things You've had a destiny similar to Your Son's, that You would wake up *within three days*, like Him, so I wouldn't be orphaned twice.

"Thirdly, that God would grant me peace if what I'm hoping for *doesn't* happen to you. But why shouldn't it? It happened to Lazarus even though he isn't equal to You. It happened to Jairus' daughter, to the young man of Naim, to Theophilus' son... True, the Master was doing it back then... But He is with You, even if it isn't obvious. Also, You didn't die of a disease like those brought back to life by Christ's action.

"But are You really dead? I mean, dead as everyone dies? No. I have a feeling You are not. Your spirit is no longer in You, in Your body, so in a sense You could be said to be dead. But considering the way You passed away, I think it is only a temporary separation of Your sinless soul full of grace from Your most pure, virginal body. It must be so! It is so! When Your body and soul will be reunited, or how life will come back into You, I don't know. But I'm so certain about it that I'll stay here, right at Your side, until God, in word or deed, shows me the truth about Your destiny."

By now, John has finished arranging everything. He sits down on the stool, putting the lamp on the floor right by the little bed. He begins to gaze at Mary's recumbent figure and prays (*Poema,* X, p.337-340).

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iii) *Mary's Assumption Body and Soul into Heavenly Glory*

Three days have gone by[192] since Mary's ecstatic sleep began. Her most sacred body is

just as it was when She passed away. Her face and Her small hands show no sign of death. There is no disagreeable smell in the room. On the contrary, an indeterminate scent is floating in the air. It smells like a mixture of incense, lilies, roses, lilies of the valley and mountain herbs.

John, [who had been keeping watch for three days,] has fallen asleep, overcome by fatigue. He is sitting on the stool, with his shoulders leaning on the wall by the open door, which leads out to the roof-terrace. The lantern, which is on the floor, sheds light on him from head to foot. His face is visibly drawn. It is very pale except around the eyes where it is red from having wept.

Day must be beginning to dawn because the roof-deck and the olive trees around the house can be seen in faint light. As it grows brighter, light entering the room through the open door helps one to discern objects that were too far from the small lamp to see until now.

Suddenly, the room is filled with a bright light, a silvery light that has a touch of a bluish hue; it is almost phosphoric. It increases until it drowns the lamp and the light of dawn. It is similar to the light which flooded the cave of Bethlehem at the time of the divine Birth. In this paradisiac light some angelic creatures appear, whose splendid light outshines the powerful light that came before them. As it happened when the angels appeared to the shepherds, sparks of many different colours dance about, flashing out of the Angels' wings whose slow motion makes a very soft harmonic murmur of arpeggios.

The angelic creatures form a crown around the small bed, bend over it and lift up the motionless body. They flap their wings more vigorously, causing the sound to increase. Through a passage which has been miraculously carved in the roof, just as Jesus' tomb was opened miraculously, they rise, carrying their Queen's body. Although it is most holy, it has not yet been glorified and, therefore,

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192. This is inferred, as we shall see, from what John said after the Blessed Virgin's Assumption to Heaven: *"I had not slept for three days!"* (*Poema*, X, p.344). (John wanted to keep watch over the Virgin Mary, but sleep finally overpowered him.)

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is still subject to the laws of matter. When Christ rose from the dead, however, He was already glorified and no longer subject to them.

The sound produced by the Angels' wings is now as loud as the boom of an organ. John, though still asleep, has already stirred two or three times on his stool, as if the powerful light and the burr of the Angels' wings had disturbed him. He now wakes up completely due to the powerful boom and a strong wind streaming in from the pierced roof and out the door. It is like a whirlwind. It stirs up his clothing, as well as the bed spread since the bed is now empty. It snuffs out the lamp and shuts the door with a loud bang.

Half asleep, the Apostle looks round him to see what is happening. He notices that the bed is empty and the roof uncovered. Guessing that some wonder must have occurred, he runs out to the roof-terrace. His spiritual instinct, or perhaps a heavenly inspiration, causes him to lift his head. With his hand, he shields his eyes from the rising sun and looks.

He can see Mary's body: still lifeless, in all respects it looks like someone sleeping. It is carried higher and higher by the angelic choir. The coat and veil flap as for one last salutation. Perhaps this is caused by the rapid assumption and the wind from the Angels' wings. The flowers which John had put around Mary's body — he kept replacing them with fresh ones — have been held in place, so far, by the garments' folds. They now begin to fall on the roof-terrace and on the ground in Gethsemane. The choir of Angels' powerful hosanna grows dimmer in the distance.

John continues to gaze on the body as it is assumed to Heaven. God certainly performed a wonder to comfort him and reward him for his love towards his adoptive Mother. John can distinctly see Mary, surrounded by sunrays, as the sun has risen. He sees Her come out of the ecstasy that separated Her soul from Her body. She comes back to life and stands up, since from now on She enjoys the properties of glorified bodies.

John gazes intently. Against every natural law, God miraculously grants him the power to see Mary as She now is while being assumed into Heaven. At this point She is no longer helped by the Angels, who sing their hosannas around Her. John is enraptured by this beautiful vision that no human pen, no human words, no artistic works will ever describe or reproduce, because it is indescribably beautiful.

John is still leaning against the wall of the roof-deck. He continues looking at this splendid, radiant, godly form going higher and higher. Really, Mary can be called a godly form, since She was formed in

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unique fashion by God Who wanted Her to be immaculate so that She, in turn, would mold the Incarnate Word. Finally, the God who is Love grants an ultimate, supreme wonder to John, the perfect lover. John sees the Most Holy Mother's meeting with Her Most Holy Son Who is also splendid and radiant and whose handsomeness is indescribable. The Son descends swiftly from Heaven, joins His Mother, and presses Her next to His heart. Together, They are brighter than two great heavenly bodies; then Jesus, together with Mary, returns to where He came from.[193] John's vision has come to an end.

John stops looking up. His tired face betrays both grief for losing Mary and joy at knowing that She has a glorious destiny. At this point joy surpasses grief. He exclaims:

"Thank You, O my God! Thank You! I had a feeling this would happen and I wanted to stay awake so I would not miss anything . . . . But I had not slept for three days! Sleep, exhaustion and grief overpowered me when the Assumption was about to begin...

"But maybe You meant this to happen, O God, so I would not interfere with that event and grieve too much...

"Yes, You certainly wanted me to fall asleep, just as You wanted me to see what I could not have seen just now if You had not worked a miracle. You have granted me to see Her as if She was near though She was far, already glorified and glorious. And You let me see Jesus again! Oh! What a happy vision! I was not hoping for that! Who could ever hope for that? Oh! that is the gift of gifts of Jesus our God to me, John! A supreme grace! To see my Master and Lord again! To see Him close to His Mother! He shone like the sun and She shone like the moon. Both of Them were shining in glory, happy to be reunited for ever! What will Paradise be like now that both of You are shining there, You, the great Stars of the heavenly Jerusalem? What will be the joy of the choirs of angels and the

193. Further on, Valtorta adds the following noteworthy details dictated by the Blessed Virgin. "As I was assumed to the feet of the Three Whom I had always worshipped, My spirit was entirely absorbed in singing hosanna. At first, a retinue of angelic spirits assisted Me with My eternal, heavenly birth, then they followed Me. My dear Jesus was waiting for Me before I arrived at the threshold of Heaven. Joseph, My just spouse on earth, also awaited Me on the very threshold, together with the Kings and Patriarchs of My race, and the first Saints and Martyrs. As a pearl mounted in a fiery stone-setting I then entered Heaven as its Queen. After suffering so much and humbling Myself as God's poor handmaid, I finally entered the Kingdom of boundless happiness. Heaven's door was shut on the joy of having Me, its Queen, whose flesh, unlike any other mortal flesh, had been glorified before the final resurrection and the last judgment" (*Poema*, X, p.353-354).

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saints? It is the same joy that I felt when I saw the Mother with Her Son. Now all Her sufferings are over, all Their sufferings, I should say. I am not sad anymore and I am filled with peace. Two of the three miracles I asked God for have come true. I have seen life come back in Mary and I feel peace come back to me. I am not anguished anymore, because I have seen both of You reunited in glory. O God, thank You.

"And thank You that, in a most holy creature, though only a human being, You have enabled me to see what the saints will be like. Thank You for enabling me to see what it will be like after the last judgment and the resurrection of the flesh: when we die our spirits go up to Heaven, but in the end, our bodies will be reunited to them and fused with them.

"I did not have to see to believe, because I always firmly believed in everything the Master said. But many will doubt that after centuries and thousands of years, our flesh, by then turned to dust, could once again become a living body. Now I will be able to tell them and swear on the highest things that not only Christ came back to life of His own divine power, but His Mother too came back to life, three days after She died — if we can say that Her death was a true death. Her flesh was reunited with Her soul and went up to Her eternal dwelling in Heaven, close to Her Son.

"I will be able to say: 'Believe, all you Christians, in the resurrection of the flesh at the end of times. Believe in life everlasting of both soul and body: a happy life for the saints, a horrible one for unrepentant sinners. Just as Jesus and Mary lived like saints, believe and live holy lives so as to share in their lot. I have seen Their bodies go up to Heaven. I can testify to it. Live justly, so one day, you too, in body and soul, can be part of that new and eternal world, at the side of Jesus the Sun and Mary, the Star of all stars.'

"Thank You again, O God! And now let us pick up whatever remains of Her: the flowers that fell off Her clothes and the olive boughs left behind on Her bed. Let us keep them. They will be useful. . . Yes, I can use them to help and comfort my brothers who could not make it in time. Sooner or later I will see them. . ."

John also picks up flower petals that broke off as the flowers fell off Mary when She was assumed. Holding them in a fold of his tunic, he enters the room. He then pays closer attention to the opening in the roof and exclaims: "Another marvel! Another wonderful difference between the marvels of Jesus' life and those of Mary's! He was God and raised Himself. By His own will, He toppled the

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stone blocking the tomb's entrance. By His own might He ascended to Heaven. Yes, by His own power. But Most Holy Mary was the daughter of a man. Angels carved an opening for Her Assumption to Heaven, and She was assumed there by the Angels. Christ's spirit came back to His body while it was still on earth, because He had to silence His enemies and strengthen all His disciples in the faith. *But Mary's spirit came back to Her most holy body when it was already on the threshold of Heaven*, because She did not need to prove anything. O perfect power of God's infinite Wisdom!. . ."

John is now gathering into a large cloth the flowers and boughs left on the bed. To these he adds those which he picked outside, laying them all on the chest's lid. He then opens the chest and puts Mary's small cushion and bed-spread inside. He goes down to the kitchen and picks other objects that She used: pieces of pottery and Her spindle and distaff. He joins them to the other items, closes the chest and sits on the stool, exclaiming:

"Now I've done everything too! Now I'm free to go wherever God's Spirit leads me. I can go! I'll spread the Word of God that the Master gave me for mankind. I'll teach Love. I'll teach Love so they can believe in Love and His power. I'll make known to them what God-Who-is-Love did for mankind: His perpetual Sacrifice and Sacrament and Rite. Through these, till the end of times, we can be united with Jesus Christ by the Eucharist, renewing His Rite and Sacrifice, as He ordered us to. All these are gifts to us from Perfect Love!

"I'll make people love Love so they believe in Him as we have come to believe and still believe. I'll sow Love so the harvest and the catch of fish be abundant for the Lord. When Mary last talked to me, She said that love obtains everything. Another time She said, rightly so, that of all the Apostles, I'm *the* lover, the exact opposite of Judas Iscariot who was hatred; while Peter was impulsiveness; Andrew, kindness; the sons of Alpheus, holiness and wisdom joined to noble manners; and so on. I, the lover, now that I don't have the Master or His Mother to love on earth, I'll spread love among the nations. Love will be my weapon and my doctrine. Love will make me overcome the devil and paganism, and conquer many souls. *This way, I'll continue Jesus and Mary*, Who were perfect love on earth" (*Poema*, X, p.341-346).[194]

194. The writings of Maria Valtorta contain two other descriptions of Our Lady's

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iv) *On the Wings of an Overflowing Love*

Maria Valtorta writes that when the Virgin Mary "passed [from earth to Heaven], She was overwhelmed by the waves of love" (*Poema*, X, p.355). She was taken up in an ecstasy of love.

[Mary speaking.] "My Son's birth was an ecstasy for Me. After being enraptured in God at that time, I became aware of Myself and of the Earth, with My Child in My arms. In a similar way, what is improperly called My death was a rapture in God.

"I trusted in the promise that I had received on the splendid morning of Pentecost. I thus thought that just before Love would return for the last time to take Me with Him in ecstasy, the fire of love that always consumed Me would increase. I was right.

"As time went by, I longed more and more to be united with My Son again. Also I became increasingly certain that I would never do as much for mankind as when I would pray and intercede for them at the foot of God's throne. That is why I would burst out more and more frequently, with growing passion, crying to Heaven with all My soul's strength: 'Come, Lord Jesus! Come, eternal Love!'

"The Eucharist was My life. It was to Me what dew is to a thirsty flower. As time went by, however, It became less and less capable of satisfying My heart's uncontainable desire. It was not enough to receive My divine Child and to carry Him inside of Me in the form of the Holy Species, as I had borne Him in My virginal flesh. My whole being craved to have the One and Triune God, no longer hidden behind the veils chosen by My Jesus, no longer hidden as the ineffable mystery of faith, but just as He was, is, and ever shall be, in the center of Heaven.

"Even My Son, in His Eucharistic ardour, set Me on fire with His embraces which betrayed infinite desires. Each time He came to Me He would almost uproot My soul at first with His powerful love, and then remain in Me with infinite tenderness, calling Me 'Mother!' and I could sense that He was anxious to have Me with Him.

"I no longer desired anything else. At the very end of My mortal

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Assumption. One, which is even more detailed than the one quoted above, is found in Appendix B. The other description, dictated to Maria Valtorta by Our Lady Herself, is in Appendix C.

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life, I did not even desire to protect the newborn Church. Everything was annihilated by My only desire: to possess God. Such was My conviction that we can do everything when we possess Him. . . .[195]

"When Eternal Love began to draw near, the *sign* which I had expected did occur. Light, sounds, and colours subsided; things were no longer present to Me when the Voice and the Splendour descended from Heaven to take My soul. Instead, Heaven was opened to My spiritual gaze.

"It is customarily said that I would have been delighted had My Son attended to Me at that time. My sweet Jesus, however, was with the Father when Love, that is the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the eternal Trinity, *gave Me the third of His kisses in My lifetime*. This kiss was so divinely powerful that it took My soul away from Me. My soul evaporated in that contemplation, as a dewdrop in a lily's cup is drawn by the sun" (*Poema*, X, p.352-353).

Elsewhere, Jesus dictated the following remarks on the role of love in Mary's Assumption.

"My disciples' death is envied by the Angels. It has already been revealed to you how, at the end of My Mother's life on earth, love increased in Her as a river in spate runs over its banks, or as a fire burns to a climax.

"For Mary, to live had always meant to live in the Lord. Neither events nor the business of life prevented Her from being united with God. For Her, to live had been to pray, and to pray had been to contemplate. The hours during which She prayed were depths of adoration and charity, pearls of priceless beauty in the great treasure of Her days.

"What would consume others as in a fever brought Her an increase of life. For Her, resting did not mean sleeping. It meant collecting Herself in God, in the quiet of night, to love Him. She would

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195. The Virgin Mary's following exhortation to believers is extremely valuable at this point. "O Christians, attain *total love*. Let everything that is earthly lose its value. Admire God alone. When you reach such modesty in your desires, you will be rich beyond compare. God will take care of your spirit, first to teach it, and then to take it. With your spirit, you will soar towards the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. You will know Them and love Them in everlasting happiness. You will possess the Trinity's graces for your brothers. We are never as active for our brothers as when we no longer are in their midst, but are light that has joined God's Light" (*Poema*, X, p.353).

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love Him with Her spirit raptured in Him. Her flesh, abandoned by Her soul, would rest, waiting for Her spirit to return, gladdened and strengthened by Her God's embrace.

"As dew nourishes flowers, so the dew of love sustained Mary. She fed Herself with it as with a divine manna.

"As a tired lily exhales its perfume for the last time, bows down under the stars and closes its white chalice, so did Mary, when Her last hour had come. Having laid on her bed, She collected Her thoughts and closed Her eyes to the world, so as to concentrate on Her last contemplation of Her God on earth.

"Bending over Her as She rested, Mary's [heavenly] Angel was anxiously waiting for a powerful ecstasy that would separate Her spirit from the earth *for ever.* Meanwhile, God's sweet commandment was already descending from Heaven: 'Come, beautiful one!' Mary's Angel, filled with holy jubilation and shining even more brightly, called other cohorts of light from Heaven so that they would sing hosanna to the Woman who had overcome and was going up to Her triumph.

"Also bending over Mary as She rested, John the 'angel' was keeping watch over the Mother who was leaving him behind. When he saw that She had passed away, he kept watching over Her, so that no profane glances should disturb, after Her death, the Inviolate One of God, asleep, so peaceful, so beautiful.

"John's love had procured him the means to understand Me more than anyone else did. In the same way, virginity enabled him to sense Mary's desires. John did not allow anyone to desecrate God's Blessed Woman. In death, She was like a flower turning whiter and purer, as a lily opening up at dawn in April. Mary dawned to Heaven.

"Your legend has it that when Thomas opened Mary's tomb, there was nothing but flowers. Mary's 'tomb' did not contain Her body. Mary never left any remains behind. Mary did not die. Her body was reunited with Her spirit, which had left beforehand. Normally, ecstasy comes to an end when the spirit returns to the body. That is the rule, but Mary's case was the exception. Her *body* returned to Her spirit after having rested on Her funeral bed.

"To God nothing is impossible. I came out of My tomb with no help but My own power. Mary came to Me, experiencing neither a burial nor the horror of putrefaction. This is one of God's most dazzling miracles. You have no relics of Mary's body or tomb, because Mary never had a tomb. Her body was assumed into Heaven. She

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is waiting for you there and prays to Her Son for you" (*Quad.* '44, p.22-24 [Jan. 5]).[196]

v) *Did Mary Actually Die?*

As mentioned previously, when Pius XII defined Mary's Assumption soul and body into heavenly Glory as a faith dogma, he intentionally avoided the matter of Her death and resurrection.

At the end of the Blessed Virgin's life on earth, there was a real *separation*. We must, however, distinguish between two kinds of separation:

1. that of the *soul* from the body (this is true death, which involves corruption of the body);
2. the temporary separation of the *spirit* from the body and life-giving soul ('death' in a broad sense, but without corruption).

[Mary speaking.] "There is a difference between the separation of the *soul* from the body, which is true death; and the temporary separation of the *spirit* from the body and its life-giving soul. This takes place during ecstasy or a contemplative rapture.

"*When the soul leaves the body*, true death ensues. Ecstatic contemplation, however, does not cause death. It is only a *temporary* flight of the spirit past the barrier of the senses and matter. It is temporary because the soul does not totally separate from the body, but does so only in its best part [the spirit], which is engulfed in the fires of contemplation (*Poema*, X, p.354).

Our Lady explained that mystical phenomenon:

"This goes to show that the soul has a superior part, *the soul of the soul*, or *the spirit of the spirit*. The soul itself preserves one's life

196. Valtorta wrote the following summary in a brief note to Fr. Migliorini O.S.M.: "I have told you what the Blessed Virgin's sleep looked like to me last night. She was dressed in white. She was modest and serene. Her hands were joined on Her chest, and Her right leg was slightly bent at the knee. I saw Her lay down on some kind of bed and close Her eyes like someone who falls asleep in abiding peace. It is impossible to describe the graciousness of Her gesture and appearance. It is very soothing and moving" (*Quad.* '44, p.24; [Jan. 5]).

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as long as it is united to the body, and this is true of all human beings. The superior part of the soul, however, is very strong in the just, but it is weakened in those who do not love God nor His Law. It is weakened even in those who are affected with no more than lukewarmness or venial sins. This weakening deprives creatures of their capacity to contemplate and know God and His eternal truths, inasmuch as human beings can (according to their own degree of perfection).

"The more a creature loves and serves God with all its strength and capacities, the more the superior part of his or her spirit increases its aptitude to know and contemplate eternal truths.

"Human beings, endowed with a rational soul, are containers which God fills with Himself. Next to Christ, Mary was the holiest of all creatures. She, then, was filled to the brim with God, His graces, charity and mercy. She was filled to such an extent that She has been overflowing on Her brothers in Christ throughout the centuries and for ever (*Poema*, X, p.354).[197]

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197. Maria Valtorta's writings obviously presuppose a certain *distinction between the soul and the spirit*, though they are *one*. This distinction was taught by Saint Teresa of Jesus (St. Teresa of Avila), Doctor of the Church.

"You will think this absurd, daughters" [the saint wrote] "but it is what actually happens. Although of course the soul is not really divided, what I have said is not fancy, but a very common experience. As I was saying [to you], it is possible to make observations concerning interior matters and in this way we know that *there is some kind of difference, and a very definite one, between the soul and the spirit*, although they are both one. *So subtle is the division perceptible between them that sometimes the operation of the one [the spirit], seems as different from that of the other [the soul]* as are the respective joys which the Lord is pleased to give them" (*Interior Castle*, Seventh Mansions, ch.I, #2. [English Translation: Peers, E. Allison, *The Complete Works of Saint Teresa of Jesus*. London, Sheed and Ward, 1946. Vol. II, p. 333; the emphasis is Fr. Roschini's]).

St. Teresa also taught about the ecstatic rapture called "the flight of the spirit" or "transport of the spirit." "It may be said to be of such a kind that the soul really seems to have left the body; on the other hand, it is clear that the person is not dead, though for a few moments he cannot even himself be sure if the soul is in the body or [not]. He feels as if he has been in another world, very different from this in which we live, and has been shown a fresh light there, so much unlike any to be found in this life that, if he had been imagining it, and similar things, all his life long, it would have been impossible for him to obtain any idea of them. . . . *If the soul is in the body or not while all this is happening I cannot say*; I would not myself swear that the soul is in the body, nor that the body is bereft of the soul" (*Interior Castle*, Sixth Mansions, ch. V., #7-8. [English translation: *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 295-296. Fr. Roschini's emphasis]).

Elsewhere, on the topic of the "flight of the spirit," St. Teresa drew this parallel: "It seems, then, that this little bird of the spirit has escaped from the misery of this

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If we admit that, we are compelled to say that the Virgin Mary's 'death' was not true death.

[Mary speaking.] "Did I die? Yes, if by 'death' we mean the *separation of the superior part of the spirit from the body.* No, if by death we mean the *separation of the vivifying soul from the body* and all that entails. (Matter, no longer kept alive by the soul, corrupts; before that, there is the gloomy reality of tombs and, especially, the pangs of death.)

"How did I die? Or rather, how did I pass from earth to Heaven? First of all in this part of My being which is immortal [the spirit], and then in the perishable part. This was just, since I had never experienced the stain of sin" (*Poema*, X, p.347).[198]

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flesh and from the prison of this body and that it is thus better able to busy itself with the work given it by the Lord" (*Spiritual Relations*, ch. V., #12; [English translation: *op. cit.*, vol. I, p.330]).

In her autobiography, St. Teresa told us also that "in these raptures *the soul seems no longer to animate the body*, and thus the natural heat of the body is felt to be very sensibly diminished: it gradually becomes colder. . ." (*Life*, ch. XX, #3; [English translation: *op. cit.*, vol. I, p.119; Fr. Roschini's emphasis]).

Let us bear in mind that Maria Valtorta did not know the works of any mystic (including Saint Teresa of Jesus).

198. Elsewhere, the pious Seer wrote the following, which she copied from a previous dictation she had received from Jesus. [The copy contains a number of changes and additions. The original dictation is translated on p.355. Editor.]

"A tradition has it that Thomas reopened Mary's tomb and found nothing but flowers. It is only a legend. No tomb ever enclosed Mary's remains, because Mary never left any remains in the human sense of the word, since She did not die as all living beings do.

"According to God's decree, only Mary's spirit had separated [from Her body] and gone forth. Her most holy flesh joined it later. This ran counter to the usual course of things. Rapture (that is, ecstasy) normally ends when the spirit returns to its normal state. In Mary's case, however, it was Her body that was reunited to Her spirit after resting on its funeral bed for a long time.

"God can do anything. I came out of the tomb with no help but My own power. Mary came to Me, to God, to Heaven without experiencing the gloomy tomb with its horrible putrefaction. That is one of God's most dazzling miracles. It is not unique, however, if we remember Enoch and Elijah. Since they were dear to the Lord, they were taken away from earth without experiencing death, taken to a place which God alone and the heavenly inhabitants of Heaven know. They were just men, but they were nothing compared with My Mother, whose holiness is inferior to that of God alone.

"That is why there are no relics of Mary's body or tomb. Mary had no tomb and Her body was assumed into Heaven" (*Poema*, X, p.350-1).

Evidence for Mary's alleged 'tomb' in Jerusalem (in the valley of Gethsemane) is too late. The earliest authors do not mention it.

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vi) *Mary's Glory in Heaven*

Concerning Mary's remarkable glory in Heaven, we can find in Maria Valtorta's yet unpublished writings a number of *bright heavenly images*, such as heavenly snow, light, and harmony. For example:

As I am writing this morning, [Aug. 2, 1944] I can see Her, as it were, in the midst of paradisiac snow. I am standing, as it were, in the middle of snowdrifts as far as the eye can see; they appear very white in contrast with the vivid blue sky.

This "snow" is made up of countless hosts of Angels. Angels: live pearls flying in the sapphire of Heaven. Angels, angels everywhere: light and harmony. The whitest pearls and best-polished diamonds seem stained and opaque compared with the Angels' light. Compared with the Angels' harmonies, the most perfect, sweetest singing on earth sounds like a jarring noise.

In joyous circles of snow-white light, they surround the Blessed Mother of God, whose light is yet whiter and even more dazzling. Her light is so bright that Her face and hands seem to be suns glaring with almost unbearable rays. I can hardly see them, hidden as they are behind the sheet of light streaming out of them. A halo, an intangible shield of glorious light surrounds Her beloved face and Her dear hands joined in prayer.

Even if I shut the eyes of my soul before such great splendour, I still perceive Mary's blissful smile and Her soft, humble gaze which is so chaste and filled with love. Her eyes are half hidden behind Her eyelashes. They are lowered towards our poor Earth and the poor Maria that I am. Her gaze is that of a humble, chaste Virgin, rejoicing in Her feast yet with no trace of haughtiness.

I gather from Her attitude that She is reciting Her *Magnificat* again. Although it expresses Her gratefulness for the gifts that She has received, it is mostly a song of praise to God.

I can see nothing but the Angels rejoicing and the Mother and Queen standing on Her splendid support, which is made of light, nothing but light ascending to surround Her. How beautiful She is in Her robe made, as it were, of pearls! Her face and hands dwarf every source of light with their splendour.

What great radiance is our Mother's! It refreshes and purifies my soul as though I were, as I mentioned previously, on snowdrifts going as far as the eye can see, and could see but immaculate snow against

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a pure sky. Oh! paradise!. . . (*Quad. '44*, p.559-560 [Aug. 2]).

[Jesus speaking to the Seer]. "In order to show you what Her glory is like, I saw to it that in Heaven, Mary would be a Living One like Me. She is inferior to none but God since He created Her. Her maternity and Her sufferings as Co-Redemptrix have made Her superior to any other creature (*ibid.*).

vii) *A Scholarly Question: Was the Virgin Mary Aware of Her Privilege?*

One day, Mary confided in John. She said that She hoped "to give up the ghost at the same place Jesus had ascended to the Father" (in other words the mount of Olives.) John said to Her: "Mother, You too will be taken up [to Heaven, soul and body]." She replied: "No. I am not Jesus, you know. I was born humanly" (*Poema*, X, p.282).

John drew Her attention to the fact that She was born without original sin and that for this reason She would experience the destiny Eve would have had if she had not sinned. In other words, Mary would be raised to Heaven directly, soul and body, without making a detour through the dark kingdom of death.

The Blessed Virgin asked John if he had learned this from Jesus. John replied that the One who told him was the Holy Spirit. It was the Paraclete, "the One the Master told us about, [the One] Who would reveal to us all truth and all things to come" (*Poema*, X, p.282-285).

[Mary speaking.] "On account of My humility, I could not imagine that so much glory was in store for Me in Heaven. I was *almost certain*, [however,] that My human flesh would not undergo corruption. Bearing God had sanctified it. Also, God is Life. When He saturates and fills a creature with Himself, His action is like spices that preserve from the corruption of death" (*ibid.*, p.355).

Because Mary was humble, She was not completely certain that She would obtain such a distinguished privilege.

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She could not bring Herself to view it as unquestionably Hers.

d) *The Dogmatic Foundations of the Assumption*

The foundations of Mary's Assumption consist especially in

1. Mary's role as Mother of God, and
2. Her unique privilege as the Immaculate Conception.

That is succinctly expressed in Jesus' following dictation to the Seer.

"For Her, the end of life immediately ushered in the glorious Life. The One who had borne the Living one was not to experience death. The One who had not been desecrated in Her humanity was not to undergo the profanation of the tomb" (*Quad. '44*, p.560 [Aug. 2]).

The Assumption is thus dogmatically rooted, first of all, in Mary's role as Mother of God.

[The Blessed Virgin speaking.] "I was *almost certain* that My human flesh would not undergo corruption. Bearing God had sanctified it. Also, God is Life. When He saturates and fills a creature with Himself, His action is like spices that preserve from the corruption of death.

"I not only remained immaculate; I not only was united to God in a chaste, fruitful embrace; I also saturated Myself with God's emanations, right down to My deepest recesses. For God was hidden in My womb, busy veiling Himself with mortal flesh. But I could not imagine the joy which the Eternal's goodness had in store for Me, His handmaid. He granted Me to feel with My body the touch of My Son's hand, His embraces and His kisses. He granted Me to hear His voice with My ears again and see His face with My eyes. I had not even desired that; it would have been enough for Me, I thought, had those joys been granted but to My spirit — My whole being would have been filled with happiness" (*Poema*, X, p.355).

The second foundation for the privilege of the Assumption is the fact that Mary was similar to Eve before Eve fell from grace. Preserved from sin, the Virgin Mary had

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to be preserved from its consequence as well: death's corruption.

One day, Saint John declared to the Virgin Mary that She, like Her Son, would ascend to Heaven. The Virgin replied:

"No. I am not Jesus, you know. I was born humanly."

"Yes, *but without original sin*," [John answered]. "I am just an uneducated fisherman. I don't know anything about doctrines and Scriptures except what the Master taught me. . . . I have a feeling that You will be granted what Eve would have had if she hadn't sinned. Actually, what You get will be far better, because You were not the wife of Adam, a mere man, but God took You as His Spouse so You would give the Earth the new Adam that remains faithful to grace.

"When the Creator created our first parents, He did not intend them to die, with their bodies corrupting. Of all the bodies God created, the human body was the noblest and most perfect because it had a spiritual soul and God's free gifts. Because of this, human beings could say they were *God's adoptive children*. So God wanted them, and them alone, to pass away from the Garden of Eden to the heavenly paradise.

"Now, no sin ever stained Your soul, not even that notorious sin everyone inherits from Adam. It is the common lot, but it did not touch You. God preserved You by an exceptional, a unique privilege, because He always destined You to become the Ark of the Word. After all, even the first Ark has always had to be most pure, even though — alas! — the things in it [the Tables of the Law] have turned cold, dry, and dead because the people of God haven't kept [the Law] as they should have. . . . But *You* remained faithful to grace, You, the second Eve, so I have a feeling You won't experience death."

[At that, the Virgin Mary seems to object. In reality, She is trying to find out more.] "My Son, the second Adam, was Grace. He always, perfectly obeyed the Father and Me. He still died. And what a death it was!"

[John replies]. "Mother, He came to be the Redeemer. He left His Father and Heaven to take flesh to redeem mankind with His sacrifice, to give them back grace and so raise them to the rank of adoptive sons of God, heirs of Heaven. He *had* to die. He died in

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His most holy humanity. *You died in Your heart* when You witnessed His horrible torture and His death. You already suffered everything *to be His Co-Redemptrix*. I'm just a poor fool, but I have a feeling You won't be corruptible. You *can't be*![199] You were the true Ark of the living God! The pillar of fire protected Moses' Ark as it led it towards the promised land. In the same way, God's fire will draw You towards Its center. Aaron's stick didn't dry and didn't die. Even though it had been cut from a tree, it budded and produced leaves and bore fruit and continued to live in the Tabernacle. In the same way, You won't die like a plant that dries up, but You will live for ever, with Your whole being, in the eternal tabernacle of Heaven. Of all the women that ever lived and will ever live on earth, You are the Woman God chose. In Joshuah's time, the waters of the Jordan were opened so that the Ark could go across with its bearers and the whole people. In the same way, the barriers that Adam's sin put between Heaven and earth will open before You and You will pass from this world to Heaven everlasting. I am positive about this. God is just. What He decreed for those who don't have hereditary sin or willful sin in their souls still applies to You."

"Is it Jesus Who told you that?"

"No, Mother, *it is the Spirit Paraclete*, the One the Master told us about, Who would reveal to us all truth and all things to come. The Comforter just told me, right now, speaking to my spirit, so the thought of losing You wouldn't be so bitter. O blessed Mother, I love You and venerate You as much as my mother, more than her, for all Your sufferings, for all Your goodness and holiness. Your holiness is inferior to none but that of Your Most Holy Son. It is greater than that of all present and future saints. *You are the greatest of all saints.*" John, moved, prostrates himself, venerating Her (*Poema*, X, p.282-285).

The Blessed Virgin spoke to the Seer:

"The Creator had destined human beings, once they had lived, to pass directly from the Garden of Eden to the heavenly Paradise without dying. As evidence of this — His first creative thought concerning mankind — God wanted Me, since I was immaculate, to come

199. Liturgical, Patristic, and theological testimonies cited in Pius XII's apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*, in which he dogmatically defined the Blessed Virgin Mary's Assumption, speak in this way also.

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to Heaven, the everlasting Kingdom, in body and soul as soon as My life on earth would come to an end.

"I am the unquestionable manifestation of what God had conceived and intended for mankind: an innocent life that knew nothing of sin; a calm passage from this life to eternal life.

"As someone merely crosses a threshold to enter into a palace, so man, with his whole being, both his material body and spiritual soul, would have passed from earth to Paradise. His being, received from God, would have reached complete perfection at once, both in the flesh and the spirit. This perfection was meant, in God's mind, for all creatures who would remain faithful to Him and to grace. This perfection would be reached in the fullness of the bright sunshine which God, the eternal Sun, fills Heaven with.

"Once I was assumed body and soul into the glory of Heaven, God placed Me before the Patriarchs, Prophets and Saints, Angels and Martyrs. He said:

"'Here is the Creator's masterpiece. This is what I, God, created in My own image and resemblance. Of all the children of man, She is the most faithful resemblance. She is the result of the Creator's perfect work. She is the marvel of the universe. Her being possesses both created matter and that which is most divine in a spirit. Her spirit is eternal like Me. Like Me, it is spiritual, intelligent, free, and holy. Her flesh is the holiest and most innocent of all. Every other living being, in all three kingdoms of creation, has to bow before Her. She is the manifestation of My love for mankind. I wanted mankind to have a perfect body and a blessed destiny of eternal life in My Kingdom. She is the proof that I have forgiven mankind. By the will of the Trinity of Love, I have granted it rehabilitation and I have re-created it. She is the Mystical Touchstone, the Wedding Ring between God and humanity. She rolls time back to the first days. She gives My divine eyes the joy of contemplating an Eve such as I created her, nay, even holier and more beautiful, because She is the Mother of My Word, and because She is the Martyr of the greatest act of forgiveness.'" (*Poema*, X, p.355-357).

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D) Mary in the Time that Follows Her

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The era which began on the day of Mary's glorious Assumption will continue until the end of time. It is characterized by two uninterrupted operations: one in which Mary takes the initiative on our behalf, and the other, in which humanity responds to Her.

Mary's continuous action for humanity consists in Her grace-giving presence to us and beneficial help of all kinds.

Humanity's action towards Mary is an uninterrupted hymn of filial praises, gratitude, and love.

Maria Valtorta has described and remarkably well illustrated these two reciprocal actions.

I. Mary and Humanity *p. 367*

II. Humanity and Mary *p. 369*

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I. MARY AND HUMANITY

The Virgin Mary

"has become an ocean of love in Heaven. Her charity overflows on Her faithful children and even on Her prodigal children. She does this for the salvation of all" (*Poema*, X, p.355).

The nineteen centuries which have elapsed since the day of Her glorious Assumption seem to bow under the gentle weight of Her acts of generosity. Her charity has indeed overflowed throughout the centuries, as She never ceased showering innumerable spiritual and material graces.

She does not limit Her acts of kindness to Her faithful children: She continually extends them also to Her prodigal children. Thus She shows Herself to be always the Mother of Mercy.

The supreme goal of Mary's ongoing, uninterrupted action for all Her children, whether good or bad, is none but their salvation, universal salvation.[200] She is, and acts as, Mother of all. Mary has and can have but one single irresistible desire: to see all Her children in Heaven with Her, close to Her Motherly Heart.

"The Heart of the Mother of humanity — My heart — is in Heaven and throbs with anxious love for all of you, just and sinners alike. Yes, My Heart wants to have all of you with Me in the blessed Fatherland, for ever and ever" (*ibid.*, p.349).

One of the reasons that motivated the Virgin Mary to sharpen Her desire to reunite with Her divine Son, was the certainty that She "would never do as much for man-

200. Of course, that goal cannot be completely achieved, since it is a dogma of faith both that there is a Hell and that there are people in it. Nonetheless, it has always been the Trinity's will and Mary's desire for all to be saved. (See 1 Timothy 2:4.) People who go to Hell, then, go there because of their own will stubbornly opposed to God's will. Mary prays for all, God responds to Her prayers, and the rest is up to the people. [Editor.]

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kind" as when She is in Heaven, "praying and interceding for them at the foot of God's throne" (*ibid.*, p.352).

Praying and interceding for Her children, humanity. That, in a nutshell, is Mary's heavenly life from the day of Her glorious Assumption until this day, and from today until the end of time. Our divine Mediatrix was indeed deeply persuaded that

> "We are never as active for our brothers as when we no longer are in their midst, but are light that has joined God's Light" (*Poema*, X, p.353).

In God's infinite light, She *sees* all the needs of the Church, Her daughter, and of every single member, Her children. More than that, She can *help* each and every one of them in their needs, since, as Mother of God, She has a special place in God's heart. Finally, She *wants* to help all of humanity in its needs, because She loves all of us with Her motherly love, which desires nothing but what is good for Her children.

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II. HUMANITY AND MARY

The activity which humanity displays with respect to Mary is admirably summarized in John's words to Mary shortly after Her blessed 'death':

"In response to Your song, the Earth, with all its peoples and nations, will glorify You, honour You, and love You as long as the world lasts. Thus Tobiah's rather obscure prediction about You [Tobit 13:13-18] will come true, because the One who really carried the Lord inside of Her is *You*, not the Holy of Holies.[201] Single-handedly, You have loved God more than all the High Priests and all the others in the Temple put together over the centuries. Your love is ardent and most pure. Because of that, God will make You most happy" (*Poema*, X, p.335).

Tobit's prediction

This prediction, to which John alludes, is the following:

"As a glorious light You shall shine
to all the ends of the earth.
Many nations from afar shall come to You,
from all the ends of the earth,
to dwell close to the holy name of the Lord God,
with gifts in their hands for the King of heaven.
Within You, generation after generation
shall proclaim their joy,
and the name of Her Who is Elect shall endure
through the generations of this age.

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201. The *Holy of Holies* or *Sanctuary* was a compartment in the Temple which contained the Ark. (The Ark was originally kept in a tent, the Tabernacle.) On either side of the Ark, a Cherub was posted. The Cherubim were ten cubits high (fifteen feet), had their wings spread out, and were made of wild olive wood plated with gold (1 Kings 6:23-30). None but the High Priest ever entered the Holy of Holies, which was mysteriously obscure and particularly sacred. He entered it no more than once a year, on the Day of Atonement.

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"Cursed be any who speak harshly to You,
cursed be any who destroy You,
who pull down Your walls,
who overthrow Your towers
who burn Your houses!
"Blessed forever all who build You up!
Then You will exult, and rejoice
over the sons of the upright,
for they will all have been gathered in
and will bless the Lord of the ages.
"Happy are those who love You!
Happy those who rejoice over Your prosperity!
Happy those who have mourned
over all Your afflictions!
For they will rejoice within You,
witnessing all Your blessedness in the days to come"
(Tobit 13:13-18; [see note 187 on p.345 for Douay]).

In *Il poema dell'Uomo-Dio,* Jesus applied this hymn to Mary. When Judas Iscariot objected that it was about Jerusalem, Jesus made this solemn reply:

"Would God still be present in the *Tabernacle* in Jerusalem? Can God, in His glory, remain in the presence of the sins committed within the Temple's walls? Another Tabernacle was necessary, one that would be holy. It would be the Star that leads the lost to the Most High. This Tabernacle is the Co-Redemptrix. For ages unto ages She will rejoice that She is the Mother of the redeemed. . . . That [Tobiah's canticle] is the Co-Redemptrix' real canticle. It is already being sung in Heaven by the Angels who can see... The new heavenly Jerusalem begins in Her. Yes, that is the truth. The world ignores it, and so do the Rabbis of Israel, steeped in darkness as they are..." (*Poema,* VII, p.1582).

Elsewhere, God said:

"Every other living being, in all three kingdoms of creation, has to bow before Her" (*Poema,* X, p.356).

Aware, throughout its history, that the new heavenly

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Jerusalem has dawned in Mary, Christendom, for nearly twenty centuries, has been bowing down before Her. The history of Christianity is but a living and throbbing commentary of Tobit's prophecy, nay, of Mary's own prophecy, with which it coincides. "Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call Me blessed" (Lk 1:48; [Douay]), Mary declared shortly after becoming the Mother of God.

Commentary on Tobit's prophecy

"As a glorious light You shall shine to all the ends of the earth."

Wherever Christ, the God-Man, sheds His bright light — throughout the world — there His noble Mother sheds Her bright light also. Indeed, wherever "the true Light" (John 1:9) shines, She who is like the dawn of God shines also, since the Light came out of Her womb. Yes, wherever Christ is worshipped, loved, and exalted, there His Mother is venerated, loved, and exalted. The earth, with its five continents, may be compared to an immense cathedral with five marvellous naves; on its pediment an inscription sparkles out: *"To Christ the King, and Mary Queen of the universe."* It would be easier to separate the sun from its light than to separate Christ from Mary, or Mary from Christ.

"Many nations from afar shall come to You, from all the ends of the earth . . ."

All the nations that converted to Christ also converted to Christ's Mother. As they have outdone one another in worshipping Christ by every means and in all possible forms, so they outdid one another in venerating Christ's Mother, with a genuine loving intelligence which made use of everything: literature, sciences and arts.

Throughout the centuries, several nations consecrated themselves to Mary. Portugal, at the end of the 12th cen-

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tury, was called "the Land of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary." Saint Stephen I, King of Hungary, proclaimed Her the only Queen of his nation: "Queen of Hungary." England, in the 14th century, was solemnly called "Our Lady's Dowry." On August 15, 1638, Louis XIII solemnly consecrated France to the Mother of Sorrows. At the same time, Ireland also consecrated itself to Mary. In 1647, Ferdinand III, Emperor of Austria, consecrated himself, as well as his family and his empire to the noble Queen of Heaven. Jan II Kazimierz, King of Poland, consecrated his kingdom to Mary in 1656, adding to the litanies the invocation "Queen of Poland, pray for us!" Since then, no Polish Queen has ever been named Mary, so as to show that the only Queen of Poland is, precisely, Our Lady. With Pius XII's consent, His Excellence Zanin, Apostolic Nuncio, solemnly consecrated China to the Blessed Virgin on May 25, 1941, proclaiming Her "Queen of China." In 1946, again with the Pope's consent, the Virgin Mary was proclaimed "Patron Saint of Brazil." Finally, on September 13, 1959, upon closing the National Eucharistic Congress of Catania, His Eminence Marcello Cardinal Mimmi, Pontifical Legate, along with most Italian bishops, solemnly consecrated Italy to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the true "Queen of Italy." Fittingly, Manzoni sang: "Every proud people glorifies itself to be under Your lovable protection" (*Il nome di Maria [Mary's Name]*).[202]

Through the centuries, the arts and literature of many countries have paid an impressive tribute to Mary.

Literary homage to the Blessed Virgin in Christian nations is as impressive in the East as in the West. A good third of the poetry of Christian nations is Marian.

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202. See Roschini, *Maria SS. nella storia della salvezza* (Isola del Liri, 1969) vol.4, passim. [Let me add that in 1038, Yaroslav the Wise, Prince of Kiev, Ukraine, put his people under the protection of the Mother of God. (Doroshenko, D. *Istoria Ukraïny*. Augsburg, 1947.) Editor.]

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A quick glance at Greek, Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopian and Armenian literature or at Latin, Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, English, Hungarian, Polish, and Dutch literature — the main representatives of Eastern and Western literature — would fill our eyes with a lush flowering of delightful images, thoughts and affections, a rain of shiny pearls reflecting the various aspects of Mary's transcendent beauty.[203]

Throughout the centuries, the same nations have paid no less dignified an artistic homage to Mary. Everywhere architects have built sumptuous basilicas for Her. Sculptors have erected innumerable statues. Artists have drawn countless pictures of Her in various episodes of Her life, expressing Her mysteries and fascinating beauty. Heavenly melodies have been composed to accompany the most beautiful liturgical, poetic and historical texts pertaining to the most harmonious Creature ever to come out of God's hands. This is most striking in the case of the *Ave Maria*, the *Magnificat*, and the *Stabat Mater*. The world's greatest artists never failed to offer to Mary the flower of their art.[204]

"Many nations from afar shall come to You, from all the ends of the earth, to dwell close to the Holy Name of the Lord God, with gifts in their hands for the King of Heaven."

[When the Lord God dwelled in the Temple, pious Jews came to worship Him in Jerusalem. Now that, through the Incarnation,] Christ our God came to dwell in His [new] Temple — Mary's most pure womb — we come to worship Him through Mary — the spiritual Jerusalem.

Thus "many nations shall come to [Mary] . . . to dwell

203. See G. Roschini, *Omaggio universale della letteratura a Maria* [*The World's Literary Tribute to Mary*], in *Mater Ecclesiae*, 7 (1971), p.158-164.

204. See G. Roschini, *op.cit.*, passim.

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close to the Holy Name of the Lord God." Indeed, we come to Mary "with gifts in [our] hands for the King of Heaven," that is, we offer, through Mary, our homage of love and worship to Christ our King.

"Within You, generation after generation shall proclaim their joy."

Throughout the centuries, Christians have proclaimed their joy over Mary especially in the innumerable Marian shrines built all over the earth. Italy alone has over one thousand such shrines. So does France, and so does Spain.[205] In all these sanctuaries, the faithful are not content expressing to the Virgin Mary trust in Her intercession in order to obtain graces and favours of all kinds. They also perpetually manifest their filial jubilation for the graces and favours they did receive. Countless ex-votos covering the walls and surroundings of sanctuaries bear witness to this.

"And the name of Her Who is Elect shall endure through the generations of this age."

Even cities scintillating with grandeur and glory will one day disappear and be blotted from the memory of peoples, but the name of God's Elect "City," the spiritual Jerusalem, the blessed Virgin, Mother of God and Mother of Humanity, shall never disappear.

"Cursed be any who speak harshly to You, cursed be any who destroy You, who pull down Your walls, who overthrow Your towers, who burn Your houses!"

Those who have dared to *curse* the One Who is "blessed . . . among women" [Lk 1:28, 42; Douay] are poor and miserable blasphemers. How many blasphemies, of the most brazen kind, have been uttered against our Heavenly Mother by so many of Her ungrateful chil-

205. See G. Roschini, *op.cit.*, passim.

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dren!. . . How many handfuls of obscene mire have been diabolically thrown at Her innocent person! It is to repair those insults that the "Marian Reparation" movement was founded.[206]

Those who have tried to *destroy* the admirable "City of God," Mary, are precisely the heretics who, through the centuries, with their inept criticisms, have denied Mary's extraordinary roles and unique privileges, especially Her divine Motherhood (Nestorius) and Virginity (Elvidius, etc.). These heretics, excommunicated by the Church, sought to "pull down [Her] walls," that is, Mary's remarkable functions which constitute Her very reason for existence. They then sought to "overthrow [Her] towers," that is, what defends Her walls: the Magisterium of the Church, Holy Scriptures, and Tradition. The heretics finally sought to "burn [Her] houses," that is, to blot out Marian devotion from the hearts of the faithful, as well as filial piety towards their heavenly Mother.

"*Blessed forever all who build You up! Then You will exult, and rejoice over the sons of the upright, for they will all have been gathered in and will bless the Lord of the ages.*"

Those who have spared no efforts in rebuilding the "City of God," laid waste by the heretics, are first of all the Roman Pontiffs, the Councils of the Church, and the theologians who faithfully follow their teachings. In union with them, all the true faithful will gather round their Mother and, with Her, bless the Lord of the ages.

"*Happy are those who love You! Happy those who rejoice over Your prosperity.*"

God loves those who love Mary, and anyone who is loved by God is blessed. Those who rejoice over Her

206. See G. Roschini, *op.cit.*, p.391.

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prosperity, that is, the honour attributed to Her throughout the world, will see all their actions blessed and prosperous. May the impressive multitude of the saints, who through the centuries have expressed to the noble Mother of God the most ardent and ingenious love, be an example to us.

"*Happy those who have mourned over all Your afflictions! For they will rejoice within You, witnessing all Your blessedness in the days to come.*"

Finally, a very special blessing is in store for those who have a devotion to the Virgin Mary's inexpressible sorrows as Co-Redemptrix with the Redeemer of humanity. For the sorrows which afflicted the new Eve at the new Adam's side are genuinely characteristic of Mary's transcendent personality. While Mary merely *received from God* Her extraordinary roles and unique privileges, She actually *gave Him* something of Her own, something extremely personal: Her inexpressible sorrows. Thus, in a drive to conform Herself fully to God's will, She suffered with Christ; She joined Him in paying the penalty due to our sins and meriting for us the return of grace.

This is why, perhaps, those who have a devotion to Her inexpressible sorrows, those who "mourn [for Her] over all [Her] afflictions," will be particularly blessed, "for they will rejoice [through Her and] within [Her]," and will "witness all [Her] blessedness in the days to come." In the devotion to Mary — especially to Our Lady of Sorrows — it is difficult not to see a "sign of predestination"[207] to heavenly happiness and glory.

207. [See Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*, Nov. 20, 1947 (A.A.S. 39 [1947], 584; English Translation: Carlen, C. *The Papal Encyclicals, 1740-1981*. Vol. 4, p.147, #176). Editor.]

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E) Mary in the End Times

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Just as Mary was present in the beginning of time, when the world was made, so will She be at the end of time, when the world ends, the river of time emptying itself into the ocean of eternity.

Valtorta's writings contain two very eloquent passages about Mary's beneficent presence in the end times.

[The Holy Spirit is addressing all of us through the Seer.] "The day is coming when godlessness and injustice will possess the hearts of 99 percent of humanity. Godlessness, as well as mental and material injustice, will have pervaded all the social classes. The abomination will have entered into God's very House. This is the abomination of desolation which the Prophet [Dan. 9: 20-27], and after him the Word [Mt 24: 15-25; Mk 13: 14-23], have spoken of. It has been said that the desolation will signify the end is near, and that is true, but you have yet to give the word 'desolation' its full meaning.

"When the day of godlessness comes, God will no longer chastise you with paternal punishments. Unfortunately, these save few people. Since in that day, the greater part of mankind will already be serving Satan, *GOD WILL [ABANDON] YOU TO YOURSELVES.* He will withdraw. He will no longer act — until a flash of His will orders the Angels to break the seven seals, blow the four trumpets, and release the eagle of the three woes. After this, the horrible, fifth trumpet will be sounded, and the Judas of the end times will open the abyss of hell [Revelations, ch. 6; ch. 8: 6-13; and ch. 9: 1-12] to let loose what mankind will have desired more than it desired God.

"When? When? Have we already come to this hour, or are we entering it? You are afraid and you wonder. . . but you do not repent. The time will not be revealed to you. It is written in the hearts of today's Prophets. 'What the seven thunderclaps said to these, however, is sealed and they will not tell' [Rev. 10: 1-7].

"The entire earth shall be in an uproar like a stormy sea. All mankind will be shipwrecked, except the servants of God who are taken into Peter's boat and remain faithful to the holy Navigator. Then, *as a peaceful star rising above the horror and terror of the stormy waves, the Star of the sea shall dawn.* This will be the Morning star's last apparition before Sunrise, that is, before the Lamb of God's second and last coming. When the Redeemer, the Saint of saints, comes again, His forerunner will not be the penitent in the desert. He loyally cared for sinners to heal them of their unwieldiness and

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make them more agile to welcome the Lord, but his penances were harsh and austere. *The forerunner of the second coming will be Our Angel, the Woman who was a Seraph in Her flesh. She is the One in whom We established Our dwelling*, since We could find none that was sweeter or worthier. She is the beloved Ark of pure gold that still contains Us as She is contained by Us. She will fly across the heavens, spreading Her love to prepare a perfumed, royal way for the King of Kings. This will be Her last maternity. She will generate and give birth to all who are still living embryos and would like to be born of the Lord.

"Cast a glance towards the East: the time [of hope] is coming. Though darkness is growing thicker and ever more accursed, though it covers the Earth, a white dawn is already beginning to break. It will be sweet as none other" (*Lezioni sull'Epistola di Paolo ai Romani* [A Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans], p.44-45 [Jan. 6, 1948].)

Mary's Intervention

The Virgin Mary, then, will be like a "peaceful Star hovering over the horror and terror of the stormy waves." She will be the Star of the sea, the Morning Star which comes before the Sunrise of Christ the Judge. She will prepare the way of the King of Kings, giving birth to the last of the elect.

In the second passage, Jesus is speaking.

"The Book of Revelation foretells that in the end times, an Angel will offer the holiest of incenses before God's throne, before beginning to pour the fire of God's wrath on earth. This imperishable incense, worthy of the Most High, is the prayers of the saints. Now, could anyone doubt that the first and greatest of these prayers are My Mother's prayerful tears? The tears of My blessed Saint, My very sweet Martyr, are gathered by the Angel [Gabriel] who brought word to Her. The same one received Her consent [Her 'be it done unto Me according to your word'; Lk 1:38, Douay], and witnessed Her supernatural wedding in which the Divine Nature bound Itself with human nature. As God drew a flesh to His height, He lowered His spiritual essence to become the Peace-flesh between God and man.

"Gabriel and his heavenly companions bent over Jesus and Mary's

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suffering. They were unable to comfort Them, because it was the hour of Justice. They did not turn away, however, and their luminous intelligence registered all the details of that hour. They did so in order to proclaim them to the risen, when time shall be no more. The blessed will rejoice, but reprobates will stand condemned a first time. For both groups, this will be a foretaste of what *I* will say to them as their supreme Judge and sovereign King" (*Quad. '43*, p.345-346 [Sept. 13]).

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Appendices

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APPENDIX A
Mary's Virginal Marriage with Joseph

The scent of lilies fills the following page, where the Virgin Mary reveals to Maria Valtorta the circumstances of Her virginal marriage with Joseph.

Mary says: "My great desire was to be a virgin for life. I wanted to remain in the Temple, praising the Lord and praying, so that the Emmanuel would be sent to those who, for centuries, had been awaiting His coming and His redemption. When the High priest told Me that he intended to give Me away in marriage, I was troubled inside for the first time. (The second time I was troubled, was at the Annunciation.)

"For a moment I felt confused and depressed. It seemed to Me that the Lord did not accept My offering, to remain a virgin all My life. I thought that the Lord did not think my virginity worthy of His perfection. I examined Myself to find out how I had displeased Him. Of course, I never entertained the thought that God's justice might have been unjust. When I humbly examined Myself, I found the answer as well as peace.

"The Spirit told Me, in His luminous, loving voice, that the Priest's will, since it conformed to God's will, was not a regression in God's eyes, but a progress in the ways of the spirit. *Since it was the Lord's will, a prompt, obedient welcoming of this decision would earn Me blessings, merits, and a closer bond with the Lord My God.* Therefore, in a joyful obedient impulse I told God, through His Priest: 'Here I am, Lord, to do Your will, not Mine.'

"My Son's words found their way on My lips and in My heart many years before He Himself uttered them.

"In return for My obedience, the only thing I asked of God was that He would grant His handmaid a husband who would not scorn My vow of chastity to the Lord. I wanted a respectful companion who would not upset Me with his violence, a holy man whose heart would be enlightened by the fear and love of God so as to understand his Wife's soul. I asked for nothing else. Handsomeness, youth, social standing or money seemed so paltry that they did not occur to Me even for a second. *I asked for My future husband to be holy. I cared for nothing else. . . .*

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"When I saw Joseph, all My understandable worries melted away, like a cloud disappearing behind a rainbow. I needed only glance in his eyes to tell that he was honest, faithful, pure, and just. Although he was twice as old as Me, he still had the clear gaze of a child. This is because evil, which had bustled about him in the world, had not entered his heart, which was saturated with love of God.

"With great trust I put My hand into his. I felt I had found in him a father filled with love, a faithful spouse, a chaste companion. He would be like the olive tree and the fig tree that shaded the little house [of Nazareth] and defended it from wind and heat, offering shelter and the comfort of tenderness and food.

"My tender husband who never disappointed Me! His love for Me was a true love. He did not lose his faith even when the odds were against him. He hid his tears so I would not be troubled, showing Me only his smiles and giving Me his help. He guided Me as his first adoptive daughter. He held My hand so I would feel he was right at My side, loving Me and overcoming obstacles. With foresight he provided for My needs. He was patient, silent, and chaste as only an Angel can be.

"Yes! May the Lord be blessed for such a good husband! The Eternal had destined Me to be Queen of His angels. Already on this earth I was granted two angels as My subjects. I could feel My guardian angel's invisible presence continually moving at My side. He would surround Me with flashes of light and heavenly perfumes. The second 'angel' was My husband. His flesh, never stained by the desire of blood, lived near Mine, like that of two lilies blooming in the same garden, perfuming one another and flowering for the Lord. Two lilies, examples to one another to ascend higher and higher towards God, and to exhale the perfume of charity towards God and one another. Two lilies that never join their flower-mouths in a kiss that would defile with pollen the angelic silk of their pure robes.

"My blessed, holy Joseph! My heart never ceases thanking My Lord for giving him to Me for a husband. The Lord, as the Holy Father that He is, has indeed kept watch over His handmaid. He created this living defense, Joseph, to keep watch over My virginity called to live outside of the Temple. The world's foul breath and its noise could go no further than My guard, thus leaving the eternal Virgin free to praise God as if She was appointed to serve at the altar, beyond the Holy of Holies, where the glory of the eternal God shone" (*Quad.* '44, p.49-51 [Jan. 11).

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APPENDIX B
A Second Description of the Assumption

Maria Valtorta had more than one vision of Our Lady's Assumption. The following vision is even more detailed than the one quoted in the main text (p.348).

[I see the glorious Assumption of Most Holy Mary.] I do not know where the beginning of the vision is. I would say in a house because, from the outside, I can see a sort of whitewashed cube that seems to be a little house.

I can see a crowd of angels come out of the roof — by that I mean the top part of the cube. The angels are luminous, handsome, animated. They neither sing nor speak. They all seem to be absorbed in a loving occupation, which causes their faces to blaze with joy. Remaining in a bent posture, as though standing around a hole, they observe. Then they spread out their pearly wings and form two lines. Their smiles broaden and their lily-white, pearly, diamondy light turns brighter. It outshines the timid dawn that has barely cracked. The dawn seems to find it difficult to grow even though the sky is clear: it must be because the angels' heavenly light greatly surpasses it. I would say that the angels' light absorbs the dawn, as well as the rays from the last stars and the last moonbeams. The moon, still visible, is like a thin sickle in the sky that is turning lighter.

I have taken a long time to describe this part of the vision, but it seems to me that it lasted but a few moments. Then, like a wave overflowing a dam, an intense radiance flashes from the top of the white cube as angels' heads and wings and bodies of light surge with intense radiance. I can see our Mother in their midst. They are carrying Her in their arms; She seems like a child sleeping and dreaming sweet dreams.

She is completely dressed in white, or rather, the pearly grey of brand new, very fine linen. She is wearing a coat, a veil, and a long train of fine linen that might be Her winding sheet. Her face is no darker than the linen. It seems made of magnolia buds, and only Her delicate eyelashes draw two somewhat dark commas on Her snow white face. Her hands are joined on Her maternal womb, as high as the stomach, with Her fingertips pointing towards Her groins. Her hands seem to be shielding the womb which was sanctified by

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God's Incarnation. Her hands also seem to be magnolia petals laying on Her snowy clothing.

Mary seems asleep. Her head, leaning slightly to the right, is supported by an angel. He is filled with veneration, as befits someone carrying an important relic. A smile has remained on Mary's face. It may have been left behind by Her last loving thought.

Some of the angels rise, carrying the sacred Burden, while the others surround Her, forming a crown. Mary is being flown in the turquoise air towards the last stars and the pale moon. The world is not aware that its Queen is being taken to Her throne.

I can see the angelic cohort as it soars. The cohort's ranks are swollen by many angels coming down swiftly from the serene sky to meet them, in a holy haste to venerate their Queen. As the earth becomes more distant and Heaven, nearer, I can see. . . how small the earth is! It is a handful of dirty mud. . . As Heaven draws nearer, I can see that Mary is emerging from Her deep slumber and seems just about to awake. Her face slightly colours, as the face of someone coming to from a swoon. Her lips, parting as She begins to breathe more deeply, turn a redder hue.

The sky is completely pink in the east. The first sunbeam shines forth. It is not aimed at the earth but, flashing as lightning, reaches the One being assumed in the sky. It embraces Her and clothes Her with a most delicate, coral-like glow at once yellowish and pinkish. It is a warm kiss calling Her warmly. Mary slowly opens Her sky-blue eyes, while the sky, so close to Her, surrounds Her with its blue depths. By now the handful of mud, the earth, is no longer visible. It has disappeared with all its miseries.

Mary's eyes are opened; She can see the angels. . . She smiles and sees the angels smile. She lifts Her eyes higher and higher until She sees God's glory. She stands up. . . The angels hardly need guide Her but remain around Her. It appears that She no longer needs any support to be assumed. She is already the Queen of Heaven. The angels are only spiritual servants surrounding Her to smile at Her.

Mary, standing straight, is happy. Her hands are crossed above Her, in an act of adoration. The cohort of angels sing in the midst of their now unbearable light.

At this point, Mary also is a dazzling light. Her veil, train and tunic no longer are linen: they are immaterial clothing spun from diamonds and embroidered with pearls, such as I always see on Her.

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Her beauty is increased with indescribable majesty. She seems to be younger, eternally young. She is no older than Her Son and Lord. In the angels' midst, Jesus is coming to greet Her. She seems to be Beauty at the side of Majesty.

The Heavens close behind the procession, which entered amidst incandescent flames of love and heavenly harmonies (*Quad. '44*, p.496-498 [July 8]).

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APPENDIX C
A Third Description of the Assumption

In a dictation to Maria Valtorta, the Blessed Virgin gave yet another account of Her glorious Dormition and Assumption.

"The Sabbath rest had begun: it was evening. I talked with John about Jesus and what He was doing. The evening was filled with peace. The Sabbath had brought the noise of human affairs to a standstill. At this time, the voice of human beings and birds alike was stilled. Only the olive trees around the house rustled in the evening breeze, and it sounded as though a flight of angels was brushing against the wall of the little solitary house.

"We were talking about Jesus, the Father, and the Kingdom of Heaven. To talk about charity or the Kingdom of charity is to burst into living flames, burning the locks of matter so as to free the spirit for its mystical flight. As long as that fire is contained within the limits that God sets to retain creatures on the earth, it is possible to live and consume oneself in serving God. In this case, the flames do not bring about destruction, but supplement one's life. But when God pulls down every barrier and lets His divine Fire free to invade the spirit as It wills and draw it to Itself, one's spirit responds to Love without measure. It detaches itself from matter and soars to where it is urgently invited by Love. That is the end of the exile and the return to the Fatherland.

"That evening, I felt that uncontainable eagerness and immeasurable vitality in My spirit. I also felt a sweet listlessness, a mysterious impression that I was being drawn away from matter and all My surroundings. I felt as though My tired body was falling asleep, while My intelligence became able to reason even more brightly, as it was swallowed in God's splendours.

"Now John had been a loving, prudent witness of My every action since becoming My adoptive son, as My only Son had willed. John kindly persuaded Me to lay down on My bed and began to keep watch over Me, praying.

"The last sound that I heard on earth was the murmur of John's voice. His words were like a mother's lullaby at the crib's side. They accompanied My spirit in its last ecstasy, too sublime to be described. His words accompanied Me all the way to Heaven.

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"None but John witnessed that sweet mystery and looked after Me. He wrapped My white coat around Me, changing neither My tunic nor My veil, and neither washing nor embalming Me. John . . . already knew in his spirit that I would not experience corruption. Besides, I had told him what to do. Since he was chaste, loving, and attentive to God's mysteries, he thought of keeping this a secret. Since he was thoughtful of his companions who were afar, he decided to wait for them, the servants of God, so that they could see Me again. This, he thought, would comfort them and give them support in the stress and sorrows of their mission. John began to wait as though he were certain that they would come.

"God, however, did not decree that this should occur. As always, He was good towards the beloved; as always, He was just towards all believers. He began by lulling John to sleep so that he would not be heartbroken to see My body taken away. God then gave believers one more truth [the Assumption] to encourage them to believe in the resurrection of the flesh and the reward of a happy eternal life for the just. This new truth was added to the sweetest, most comforting truths of the New Testament: My Immaculate Conception; My divine, virginal maternity; My Son's divine and human nature, true God and true man, born not of the will of the flesh, but of divine wedlock and a Divine Cell deposited in My womb.

"God assumed Me into Heaven for yet another reason: that believers would believe that the Heart of the Mother of humanity — My heart — is in Heaven and throbs with anxious love for all of you, just and sinners alike. Yes, My Heart wants to have all of you with Me in the blessed Fatherland, for ever and ever.

"When the angels took Me out of the house, was My spirit already back in Me? No. My spirit was not to return to earth. It was worshipping before God's throne. The earth was My exile, the time and place where I was separated from My One and Triune Lord. Only when I left the earth for ever did My spirit return to shine in the center of My soul. Only then was My flesh drawn out of its dormition. Therefore, it is exact to say that I was assumed into Heaven body and soul not by My own power, as was the case with Jesus, but with the angels' help. When I awoke from this mysterious, mystical dormition, then I stood up and soared, because at last My flesh had acquired the perfection of glorious bodies. And I was filled with love. I met My Son again and loved Him; I loved My One and Triune Lord, as is the destiny of all those who live everlastingly" (*Poema*, X, p.347-350).

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APPENDIX D
Cross-References

In the present work, references to *Il poema dell'Uomo-Dio* were made to the 1975 Italian edition. The following table gives the corresponding cross-references to the volumes of the English edition which have been published as of October 1990 (volumes 1-4 only; volume 5 not yet available).

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*The English translation of *Il poema dell'Uomo-Dio* omits most notes found in the second and third Italian critical editions.

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*The English translation of *Il poema dell'Uomo-Dio* omits most notes found in the second and third Italian critical editions.

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The last three Italian volumes (volumes VIII, IX, and X) will be comprised in Volume 5 of the English edition, which is not yet available (as of October 1990).

Editor.

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APPENDIX E
Ecclesiasticus 24:11-46

[11] "And by My power I have trodden under My feet
the hearts of all the high and low:
and in all these I sought rest,
and I shall abide in the inheritance of the Lord.
[12] "Then the creator of all things commanded, and said to Me:
and He that made Me, rested in My tabernacle,
[13] And He said to Me: Let Your dwelling be in Jacob,
and Your inheritance in Israel,
and take root in My elect.
[14] From the beginning, and before the world, was I created,
and unto the world to come I shall not cease to be,
and in the holy dwelling place I have ministered before Him.
[15] And so was I established in Sion,
and in the Holy City likewise I rested,
and My power was in Jerusalem.
[16] And I took root in an honourable people,
and in the portion of My God His inheritance,
and My abode is in the full assembly of saints.
[17] "I was exalted like a cedar in [Lebanon],
and as a cypress tree on Mount Sion.
[18] I was exalted like a palm tree in [Kedesh],
and as a rose plant in Jericho:
[19] As a fair olive tree in the plains,
and as a plane tree by the water in the streets, was I exalted.
[20] I gave a sweet smell like cinnamon, and aromatical balm:
I yielded a sweet odour like the best myrrh:
[21] And I perfumed My dwelling as storax, and galbanum, and onyx,
and aloes,
and as the frankincense not cut,
and my odour is as the purest balm.
[22] I have stretched out My branches as the turpentine tree,
and My branches are of honour and grace.
[23] As the vine I have brought forth a pleasant odour:
and My flowers are the fruit of honour and riches.
[24] "I am the Mother of fair love, and of fear,
and of knowledge, and of holy hope.
[25] In Me is all grace of the way and of the truth,
in Me is all hope of life and of virtue.

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[26] Come over to Me, all you that desire Me,
and be filled with My fruits.
[27] For My spirit is sweet above honey,
and My inheritance above honey and the honeycomb.
[28] My memory is unto everlasting generations.
[29] They that eat Me, shall yet hunger:
and they that drink Me, shall yet thirst.
[30] He that harkens to Me, shall not be confounded:
and they that work by Me, shall not sin.
[31] They that explain Me shall have life everlasting.
[32] All these things are the Book of Life,
and the covenant of the Most High, and the knowledge of truth.
[33] Moses commanded a law in the precepts of justices,
and an inheritance to the house of Jacob, and the promises to Israel.
[34] "He appointed to David His servant to raise up of him a most mighty King,
and sitting on the throne of glory for ever.
[35] Who fills up Wisdom as the Phison,
and as the Tigris in the days of the new fruits.
[36] Who makes understanding to abound as the Euphrates,
who multiplies it as the Jordan in the time of harvest.
[37] Who sends knowledge as the light,
and rises up as Gehon in the time of the vintage.
[38] Who first has perfect knowledge of Her,
and a weaker shall not search Her out.
[39] For Her thoughts are more vast than the sea,
and Her counsels more deep than the great ocean.
[40] "I, Wisdom, have poured out rivers.
[41] I, like a brook out of a river of a mighty water;
I, like a channel of a river and like an aqueduct, came out of paradise.
[42] I said: 'I will water My garden of plants,
and I will water abundantly the fruits of My meadow.'
[43] And behold My brook became a great river,
and My river came near to a sea:
[44] For I make doctrine to shine forth to all as the morning light,
and I will declare it afar off.
[45] I will penetrate to all the lower parts of the earth,
and will behold all that sleep,
and will enlighten all that hope in the Lord.
[46] I will yet pour out doctrine as prophecy,
and will leave it to them that seek Wisdom,
and will not cease to instruct their offspring even to the holy age."
[Douay.]

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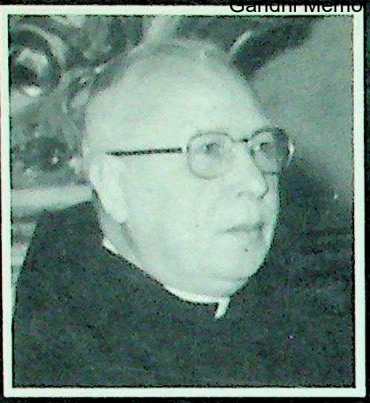

Fr. Gabriel M. Roschini, O.S.M. (1900-1977)
Based in Rome, professor at the Pontifical Lateran University of Rome; philosopher, theologian, writer of saints' lives, and mariologist of great renown.

Father Roschini, who wrote over 125 books, thought that the most important one was *The Virgin Mary in the Writings of Maria Valtorta*. He declared so to his publisher Emilio Pisani of the Centro Editoriale Valtortiano in Isola del Liri, as the first Italian edition was being prepared in 1973.

The famous mariologist makes two important declarations in the present work:

- ***Maria Valtorta (1897-1961) of Viareggio, Italy, is one of the 18 greatest female Marian mystics of all times.***
- ***". . . the Mariology found in all of Maria Valtorta's writtings — both published and unpublished — has been a real discovery for me. No other Marian writings, not even the sum total of everything I have read and studied, were able to give me as clear, as vivid, as complete, as luminous, or as fascinating an image, both simple and sublime, of Mary, God's Masterpiece."***

This work reads like a marvellous life of Mary. At the same time it is a complete course on Marian theology. It is illuminated by the clarity of Fr. Roschini's filial love for Mary, and enriched by his admirable, profoundly harmonious knowledge.

* * * * *

The book contains at the time of this second edition (1990) a large number of excerpts from various writings of Maria Valtorta that will not be translated into English for yet several years.

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